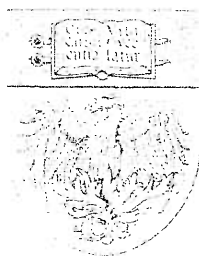


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THE PREACHER'S MANUAL.

THE ;
PREACHER'S MANUAL:

LECTURES ON PREACHING;

FURNISHING

RULES AND EXAMPLES FOR EVERY KIND OF
PULPIT ADDRESS.

BY, S. T. STURTEVANT, D.D.

"Vive, vale ! si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti ; si non, his utere mecum."

FOURTH EDITION,

G.B. Ide

REVISED, WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON PREACHING BY THE

REV. A. M. HENDERSON,

*Late of Claremont Chapel, Pentonville, now Principal of the
Theological College, Melbourne.*

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

When I was requested by the publisher to undertake the work of preparing a new edition of Dr. Sturtevant's Preacher's Manual, I accepted the responsibility with pleasure, not unmingled with a deep sense of the solemnity of the task, and of the slightness of my qualifications for it. Two ways of accomplishing the work were open. One was to replace many of Dr. Sturtevant's illustrative plans by sermons drawn from more modern sources; the other was to leave the book as it was in this respect, adding such brief notes as might guide the student in his further inquiries, without materially increasing the already large size of the volume, and to prefix a general essay on the subject of preaching. The former course would have changed the whole character of the work, so that it could no longer have been called with propriety by its author's name; and such a liberty no editor has a right to take with his author. In addition to this, it would have denied to the student access to many things which are rapidly passing into oblivion, not through want of excellence, but through the multitude of new publications, which are more likely to hold a place on the young preacher's shelves than those of the bygone age, and instead of increasing his stores, would only have cumbered him with duplicates. On these grounds I have decided in favour of the latter course, as, on the whole, the more excellent.

The work of Dr. Sturtevant has done good service in its day, and it is our hope that a longer day of usefulness awaits it. On its first appearance, in 1830, in the form of "Letters and Conversations," it was felt that it supplied a want, and the author was soon engaged on a second edition, which appeared in 1834, in two volumes, 12mo, at the price of thirteen shillings, "revised, augmented, and newly arranged, with all the essential parts of the author's Letters and Conversations;" and in 1838, "the third edition, revised and greatly enlarged," made its appearance, in a thick octavo volume, at the price of sixteen shillings. This has long been out of print, and at present every copy is eagerly bought up at a high price. The aim of the present publisher, who has purchased the copyright, is to reproduce the book in its integrity, corrected, and brought up in its literary references to the present time. Only two portions of the old work have been erased,—one portion of a note relating to the removal, some years since, of the Cartoons of Raphael to the British Museum; and a portion of the text referring to worthless books, long since superseded by books immeasurably superior. As it was desirable that the additions should not be extensive, I have never written a note unless of necessity, and have not always stayed to characterise the books to which I have referred. Nothing of trivial value has been mentioned, and the young student must betimes learn to judge for himself, and to act in the spirit of Bacon's maxim,—“Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, but to weigh and consider.” It is only thus that he will ever come to possess the understanding of a man. The book has been for many years a *Thesaurus* of religious thought, and of information on preaching. Nearly two generations of preachers have read it, and been profited by its instructions; and it is confidently hoped that, in its present

form, it will help to educate other generations yet. Adopting all that is useful in "Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon," upon which it is professedly based, it renders it needless for any who are not drawn by curiosity to read the amusing, and not seldom instructive, *farrago* of notes by which Robinson's edition of that work is enriched. No work which has been published since its appearance comes into competition with it on its own ground. The valuable works of Bridges on "The Christian Ministry," and "The Parish Priest" of Blunt, are not exclusively devoted to preaching; so that they, and the very excellent "Essays on the Christian Ministry," chiefly the productions of American authors, etc., published in *Ward's Standard Library*, may be regarded as supplementary; while the superior "Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching," by Dr. Porter, of Andover, and the invaluable and lofty work of Vinet, of Lausanne ("Homiletics, or the Theory of Preaching"), may be regarded as complementary, and conduct the student to higher forms of preaching than those at which Dr. Sturtevant aimed. Many excellent productions of a minor order have been published in this country and in America, but none which can claim to occupy the same rank. Such are "Thoughts on Preaching," by the Rev. Daniel Moore, and another book with the same title, but of vastly greater suggestiveness, by the late Dr. J. W. Alexander, of America; to which it gives me peculiar pleasure to add the small but very valuable work of my friend the Rev. James Stacey, entitled, "The Pastor and Preacher," with its instructive appendices.

But the present work stands on different ground, inasmuch as its author aimed, by a large variety of illustrative plans, to make every part of his didactic work plain to the youngest student. Every one who has tried to preach has found the difficulty of forming a plan, and many have experienced not a little benefit from practising, for a short portion of time every week, the analysis of portions of Scripture, and the distribution of the thoughts in effective order. It is of the greatest importance to every man who has the responsibility of leading the public mind in this day of public speech, to have the habit and the power of readily seizing on the chief points of a topic, marshalling them in order, and bringing to bear upon them in the shortest time the knowledge of the subject which he possesses. It will be found, we think, that this, other things being equal, constitutes the chief difference between the man of power and the feeble man. The numerous examples presented in this volume will materially assist the student in this work. They are far from being all of a high character; many of them are peculiarly faulty, such as the very first given, that of Walker on Col. i. 16—19, which is utterly destitute of all the elements of a good arrangement; but the very exercise of grappling with the cumbrous and faulty may strengthen the student to perform the work better for himself.

Another great advantage of this work is to be found in its numerous extracts of most valuable doctrinal and rhetorical matter. Conversing with a number of preachers, who, like myself, had found it a help in earlier days, they, almost to a man, referred to the benefit derived from these extracts, as aids to their theological studies, or guides in composition for the pulpit. To a young man whose library is small, this advantage can hardly be overrated; while some of the pieces presented are of the highest order of pulpit eloquence, affording the best model and the highest stimulus to the student's endeavour. Because of these many advantages I have felt confident that a new edition would be welcomed as soon as it was known. My further task in these introductory pages is to say a few words to my younger brethren in the ministry on the work they are called to perform, the

manner of executing it, and the nature and course of their preparation for it. If these words should fall under the eye of those who have attained to distinction in their art, they may do well to remember that they are not meant for them, but only for those who are desirous of knowing how to succeed in a work so arduous and so high; they are but the words of an elder brother to those whose progress he desires, and whose superior excellence he would hail with delight.

The work of the Christian preacher is the highest known upon earth, whether we consider the matter of which he treats, or the ends he is bound to seek. His special duty is to "preach the Word;" and that Word contains themes before which those of the secular orator sink into insignificance. The themes of the latter may be invested with additional interest from the fact of their novelty, or their relation to the present and the palpable, which have always power to stir the human mind; while the themes of the Christian preacher lie in a region commonly felt to be more remote from the ordinary sphere of human interest; and, in themselves relating to the spiritual and the unseen, may appear to be less calculated to lay hold on the minds of men. But the superficial interests of men are not the most enduring; the curiosity which seeks after some near thing will, from its very nature, soon change the object of its interest; while the matters of Divine revelation, with which the preacher has to do, are of the last importance to men, involving, as they do, their interests for eternity; and the appeal of the preacher is to something deeper in man's nature than mere curiosity,—something which will wake to solemn thought and earnest resolves in times of trial or calamity, and vindicate for itself the high character of sovereign of the entire man. What is the fall of dynasties in comparison with that great and awful event which stands on the first page of man's history in our world, by which the entire race is affected throughout the whole extent of its powers, relations, and destiny? What are all the noble struggles of an oppressed people for freedom—what all the devotion of their patriots, sacrificed in their endeavour to break the chain of despotism—compared with that great redemptive act of the Son of God, descending from the heights of glory, where he received the worship of an adoring throng of spotless seraphim, to become a man with men, to live poor and destitute of sympathy, exposed to the temptations of Satan, the scorn of the proud, the machinations of the wicked, and above all, to the terrible inflictions of the Divine righteousness, which crushed his spirit, and alone forced from Him the cry of anguish; and this not for himself, not for his friends, but for the violators of his law and the rejecters of his love? Or if we turn to the eloquence of the bar, and contemplate the earnest pleadings of some powerful advocate, wringing reluctant tears from the eyes of jury and of court, while he depicts with melting pathos the suffering involved in the conviction of his client, and pleads for his acquittal—do we find anything in the theme which has excited his eloquence and the emotions of his hearers, comparable to the grand scene described in sacred Scripture of a judgment-seat before which all mankind must stand for sentence,—a sentence of everlasting bliss or everduring woe? Or is there in that unit of humanity judged by his fellow-men, and only consignable at most to a sentence of a temporal character, anything to excite emotion in the bystanders at all approaching to the personal interest of every one who hears the preacher on the awful theme upon which he dwells? Or is there in pleading with others for the life or liberty of a fellow-man, anything so calculated to call forth the deeper emotions of the orator himself, comparable to the exciting and arousing work of the preacher, who comes as the ambassador for Christ, in Christ's stead, praying men to escape the eternal

doom by being reconciled to God? The answer is given in that other phrase of the apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us;" bringing before us all the infinite longings of the Divine Father's heart, after the return of his prodigal offspring—all the tender compassion of Him who said "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together;"—all the inconceivable, unspeakable love which gave the Son of his love to become the sacrifice for our sins, teaches us that such a theme is then only properly treated when it excites emotions like unto God's own, when it leads us to plead as if we were laying down our lives that men would yield themselves to God. Surely our hearts should never prove so familiar with these themes that they would lose their character of grandeur and usefulness, and their power to thrill our whole being; rather, if we entered into their spirit, and became, through constant and intense study, more familiar with them, would they impress us more, become more real to us, and enable us to use them with greater power. With such themes of thought and speech as an infinite God, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;" as a Saviour's sacrifice and ever living intercession, and a Holy Spirit's constant work for the redemption of man; with such interests as the weal or woe of the countless millions of the human race; with such destinies for all as Heaven and Hell before us, wonder may well be excited that the pulpit appears so powerless amongst the agencies of the day, and that it is found in many instances so ineffectual in the conflict with prevailing worldliness and scepticism.

Perhaps a change might be wrought in its position, and a greater power be added to its influence, if preachers dwelt upon the *greater* themes of revelation more frequently and more fervently. The man showed a wise discrimination who gave the preference to the preacher who made him feel that God was great, over the other who only produced a conceit of his own greatness. This result was effected by the former dwelling upon the greatness of God as exhibited in his whole character and work, whilst the other was only exalting the creature. If the true end of religion is to restore the disrupted relations of God and man, and to bring the creature to his true position of adoring reverence and love at the foot-stool, it can only be accomplished by the exaltation of God and the abasing of men; and in order to this all the higher and grander themes of Divine revelation should be the staple material of pulpit discourse. If the grandeur of man's being is preached as it certainly ought, it should be so set forth as to reveal the greatness of his fall and the depth of his guilt as a rebel against Him who gifted him with such high powers, and to prove an incitement to his immediate return to the foot-stool of mercy, to plead in penitence for pardon, and to consecrate his faculties to the humble service of the Great, the Holy, and the High. In treating of these highest themes all our knowledge can be rendered available, and its minutest and meanest portions will be raised and magnified by their relation to their end. What a grand illustration of the Divine eternity is drawn from the records of geology, as we carry back our thoughts through the uncounted ages during which the strata of the earth, with all their wealth of organic remains, were deposited in ascending series of dispensations of life of incalculable duration, coming into being and passing away; and yet when we reach the first created being we are but on the threshold of that eternity which stretches back through an unknown infinity of duration! And how does our knowledge of the phenomena and laws of the heavens affect us with the greatness of their author, and assist us in setting it forth! As we rise from our

earth to the sun, and from that again to all the visible assemblage of suns, equal or superior in magnitude, as we survey the distances by which they are separated, and measure by the speed of light the awful spaces from which it flows in upon us ; or go out in imagination into those regions unknown, beyond the farthest known nebulae, whose light requires thirty millions of years to reach us, and conceive of space illuminated by the same beams in the opposite quarter to our own ; until, overwhelmed with the vastness of the conception, we fall prostrate before the Eternal Majesty, with a new feeling of the meaning of Solomon's words, "Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee !" And how, on the other hand, are our minds affected as we take the microscope to examine the wondrous beauty of some fairy flower, which discloses to our eager gaze a greater exquisiteness of colour, and a more marvellous complication of organization the more attentively we study it. Or as we take up some insect, dull enough to our eye, and place it, member by member, under the magnifying lens, and see its tiny limbs dilate into organs of such formation and curious contrivance, and its dull appearance into plates of burnished hues, more brilliant than the emerald, the ruby, or the opal, and see its palpitating heart full of glad life, are we not overwhelmed with the thought of his tenderness of love, that has thus formed the drooping flower for a few days of loveliness to delight our vision, and has breathed such a delighted life into the ephemera ; and do we not realize more sweetly the lesson of the Divine Master, drawn from the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, and look up with calmer heart to Him who reigns above the heavens, and who shows himself so interested in, and occupied with the meanest thing that lives ? The preacher need never fear that in treating the highest subjects which the Bible supplies, he must lay aside as useless all that he has learned from other sources ; rather he should study to invest that learning with the highest dignity, and use it for its grandest purpose ; and this he can only do when his main end is not its exhibition, but the exhibition of a grander theme by its illustrative aid. If such an object were kept in view by all preachers, if the due subordination of topics were observed, the pulpit would cease to be a place distilling weariness upon those who sit beneath it, happy only when slumber ends their pain, or the benediction makes them blessed indeed ; and would become a centre of light, a fountain of life, and a throne of power, around which the people would gather with eager gaze and with panting hearts, and before which the loftiest minds would count it their highest honour to bend their laurelled brows.

It is not meant by these remarks to cast the slightest reflection on the treatment of the topics of revelation that are less grand and imposing. In the infinite variety of Scripture there are matters that, humanly speaking, are great and small. In its garden grow the primrose and the violet, as well as the rose and the lily, and each has its own beauty and sweetness ; but that beauty is of such an affecting loveliness that he whose heart is touched by it cannot fail to speak of it so as to charm the minds of his hearers and win them to the truth. Who can read the twenty-third Psalm without a feeling of the insinuating character of this beauty ? and who does not see that it is linked on to that which is so grand in the first word ? for all its calm repose and pastoral delight derive their being and their charms, not from earthly relations, but from the fact that "The Lord is my shepherd." It is, if we might so phrase it,—a golden chain of beauty depending from the throne of the Eternal. Often, too, in the unfrequented byways of Scripture we meet with passages of a similar character. Take the passage in the first chapter of the Gospel according to John, where John and Andrew pass from the Baptist's side timidly to follow

Jesus. What can be more simple than the act, and what more seemingly commonplace than his enquiry, "What seek ye?"—their reply, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?"—and his rejoinder, "Come and see?" Yet in this simplicity how much that is grand is revealed. This common-looking action is the first union of human souls to Jesus, the first beginning of the Church on earth, the first grand illustration of the truth "Every one that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." These simple seeming words are the first words of Christ as the Messiah to man, and convey an infinitude of meaning as to the mode of his instruction—the mode of all great teachers—by interrogation to awaken a definite consciousness of need, that in his second word he may disclose to them the fulness of his grace—claiming their investigation, and thus placing his truth for ever in the light, not fearing to be examined, but only yielding to the candid inquirer more and more of instruction, conviction, and delight as it is pondered—and effect its end, as the two disciples reached the highest and most important conclusion from those few hours' converse,—“We have seen the Messias.” It is thus that all Scripture is profitable for elevating the soul of man; for the things that seem at first sight the simplest are linked to the most sublime, and those which seem to be byways lead out by near and easily discovered courses into the broad places.

The difficulty of giving an air of greatness to the subject is felt most frequently by preachers when discussing religious and moral duties; and some men preach on these in a manner so spiritless, dry, and methodical, that acute and not unspiritual hearers have talked of their homilies as the *avoir du pois* of religion; so do they apportion and weigh out the various duties. Discrimination is greatly needed in treating those subjects, to consider them and set them forth in their true nature and in their proper relations and order of subordination; but discrimination must also be exercised in the manner of doing it, that people may not be disgusted with the dryness of a *hortus siccus*; while the living beauty of a holy life is more delightful to both preacher and hearer. A little definition and distinction are necessary, but the analysis of some duty or virtue may be made as interesting if well executed as any other part of the discussion. Then let the preacher select from the biographies of holy men the most familiar amplifications of the grace or virtue treated, and in this department the Scriptures are full; and then let him urge the motives pressing to its exercise, bring to bear upon it all that is grandest in our relations to God and eternity, all that is most inspiring in communion with God, all that is most touching in our indebtedness to him; and no one can complain that duty is hard, and that sermons concerning it are dry and sapless. And if we would always remember the bearing of the work of Christ upon this department of Christian life, as exemplified in Scripture, and especially in the writings of Paul, no one could ever complain that the preaching of Christian duty was unevangelical. Does Paul rebuke schism in the Church at Corinth? it is by the enquiry, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Does he exhort them to remove from their communion an offender, and purge out the old leaven? It is because "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Does he urge them to holiness of heart and life? It is by this motive "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." Does he seek to stimulate them to a larger liberality? "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." This sample of evangelic motives applied to duties so various, and gathered from such a limited portion of Scripture is a lesson to us who preach, on the rudiments of our work; and the more we enter into the spirit

of this principle, the more we feel the wondrous force and grandeur of this motive. There is a power in the Saviour lifted up to draw all men unto Him, there is a blinding light issuing from the cross which pales all earthly glory. The eye that has truly gazed upon it can see no beauty in the objects of ordinary attraction. The language of the soul in which the love of Jesus is rooted is—"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That world so fascinating before has lost its charm, and now appears no more attractive, no more engaging than the blackened corpse of the crucified man, on which the winds, and sun, and birds of prey have done their worst; and the man who has felt the supreme attraction of Jesus has no more care for all the shows and gauds of this world than he would who hangs upon the cross with eyes filmed in death. Every true preacher of Christ knows in his pastoral experience the power of this glorious theme. When all his denunciations of worldly pleasures have failed to convince, and have driven on their devotees to more daring and reckless indulgence in them, the preaching of the cross has rendered them disgusting; when discussions of the right and wrong, the consistency or inconsistency of certain practices with Christian profession have left the waverers worse than they found them, the love of the crucified Saviour borne in with power upon the soul has decided them for ever.

I can never join in the cry about preaching Christ, so often heard in our day, which seems to imply that no other theme should ever be heard from the pulpit, that preachers should still harp upon one string, and count all Scripture unprofitable which does not treat of that one theme. This is deeply irreverent; for it presumes to sit in judgment upon God's wisdom in his word, and to displace from the office of public instruction large portions of that, *all* of which the inspired apostle has declared is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Yet notwithstanding this protest against a senseless and irreverent popular cry, it is my deepest conviction, that the preacher who seldom introduces the grand theme of a crucified Saviour into his public ministrations, however intellectual or beautiful his orations may be, must fail in accomplishing the great ends of the Christian ministry; while he whose heart feels most the attraction of this theme, and wisely uses it, whatever his defects in other respects, will secure the blessing of God and the salvation of souls.

And let us never forget that the glory of God in the salvation of souls is the great end of the Christian ministry, and that he only who accomplishes this work is the successful minister. We may charm all men by our eloquence, we may dazzle all minds by our brilliant fancies, we may crowd every building where we perform our parts, we may draw all classes of men to listen to the truth of God, because we have invested it with a new beauty for their eye—and there may be nothing meretricious in the ornaments we have hung around it, nothing false or unhallowed in the motives, and nothing but what is commendable in the methods by which we produce the effect; for we are bound to consecrate to God every talent we possess in its highest exercise—but if we fall short of this great end all our labour is but laborious trifling, all our popularity is but a vain show, and all the effects we have produced are but as the small dust of the balance. In comparison with "saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins," what are all the achievements of warriors, legislators, statesmen, orators, or poets?—so far as they have stopped short of this. The fruit of their great, and, in many cases, improving and exalting labours, is only temporary; the benefits they have bestowed may spread wide as

humanity, and be as lasting as man's course in this world, but there their influence ends ; while the work of him who saves a soul from death goes on brightening and expanding for ever. Where in comparison with it stand the labours even of a Howard, a Fry, or a Nightingale, though their fame is world-wide, so far as these labours were a mere alleviation of temporal suffering, the lightening of the prison gloom, or the relief of the physical and moral miseries of a hospital ? If we could from this moment banish from earth every sorrow, every misery, every pain, and restore a physical paradise, but stopping short of salvation, our work would be deemed the loftiest theme for poets, and would far surpass the eulogistic power of the mightiest orators ; yet would it be insignificant beside the achievement of one soul saved. Count all the groans and sighs that have burst from the heart of oppressed humanity from its first sorrow until now, collect the floods of tears which have flowed from eyes darkened with sorrow, sum up all the pangs that have rent the soul of poor humanity since Adam sinned ; the sum is mighty, the contemplation of it harrowing, but it is calculable and finite. You can dole out its bitterness drop by drop, and exhaust them all in the experience of one lost soul, and yet its eternity of suffering has still to be endured. On the other hand enumerate all the joys that have filled the hearts of the saved from the first until now, in earth and heaven ; add to these all the blessedness experienced, from the period of their earlier creation, by the spotless, loyal, and adoring angels of light ; they too are conceivable and numerable ; but in the wasteless ages of eternity, in the honours and dignities of heaven, in the inconceivable bliss of the saved soul in the presence of God, all these would be but as the drop of the bucket to the ocean—only the beginning of its eternal bliss. Let the Christian preacher but seek to realize this end ; let him remember, that one soul saved is never solitarily saved, but is the forerunner of others until the unit in the progress of the ages swells into the thousands of the final day, and he will feel that when he preaches the word of God with this end in view, he has a motive which infinitely transcends all others, imparting to his labour a character of grandeur and goodness which have no comparison with any other occupation known among men.

Having now spoken of the work of the minister, it is wise to direct attention to the *manner* of executing it. In all ages the manner of conveying thought and sentiment has been as influential as the matter conveyed ; and he who neglects this part is culpable to a more serious extent than many wish to think. Whether we will or not, men will be influenced by our manner of presenting the thought and our manner of delivering it ; and if we love the thought and wish it to prevail for its own sake, we should for its sake study so to present it as to procure its acceptance. It is vain to struggle against what proves itself to be a constituent principle of the mind. If we look at books whose matter is of rarest excellence, but written without order and arrangement, we see in the general neglect of them the nemesis which waits on their authors' contempt of manner : while those whose clearness of order readily imparts to the reader a knowledge of the author's mind, are read with avidity, although hardly worth the pains. Who reads the *Enneads* of Plotinus ? and yet the few hardy adventurers who have dared the labour have found riches to compensate them, and the gems they have brought up from this mine shine with rarest brilliancy on the learned page. How few even of those who praise John Owen will dare to say they love to read him, or to any extent do read him ? and who that really enjoys the thoroughness and exhaustiveness of his discussion, and the fervour of his spirit, but is wearied with his cumbrous involutions, and loses all patience with his minute and irregular subdivisions, and

inferences? We believe it is owing to this want of care for good arrangement, and the barbarous habit of following a debased scholasticism, that the rich treasures of theological and spiritual wisdom in the precious volumes of our Puritan writers are sealed to the reading world. It requires a love for the substance greater than exists in ordinary people or even ministers, to master the repugnance which instinctively recoils from a manner so perplexing and irritating. But even where this fault of arrangement is not so glaring, as in the great work of Locke on the Human Understanding, or Butler's Analogy, there is a want of warmth and interest, and such an entire absence of all colour of fancy or light of imagination in their style, that such books are read at first as a matter of stern duty, and from no love except that which arises from the desire after truth; and it is only after we have grown to see the value of the works, and have learned to admire their grand plan and massive elevation, that we become reconciled to the want of those lighter graces, which enhance the preciousness, by imparting the lustre of beauty. The diamond may be more precious as a mass before it has passed through the hands of the lapidary, but his labour is most properly deemed essential to its fitness to shine on the brow of royalty or on the bosom of beauty.

Two things, therefore, belong to manner, arrangement and style; and that manner is bad which does not embrace them both. A man who puts his best, most striking, and original thoughts first, and his commonplaces last, is felt by all to have committed a blunder, though many may not know wherein it consists. A variety of this fault is sometimes committed by ambitious young preachers, who produce a splendid and most elaborate introduction, into which their best thoughts have flowed, and on which their enthusiasm was expended; while all the rest of the performance, though good in itself, appeared dull beside its brilliancy. It has all the effect of a lie to the hearer—making a promise which is not kept. It is as if we were led through some magnificent gateway, and along an avenue of rare breadth, bounded by ancestral trees the growth of centuries, and, expecting to see at its close some royal palace or baronial castle, we were introduced to a mud cottage. Such preachers soon lose their hold upon the minds of their hearers, who know when the best is over, and seem to make up their minds to repose after the first outburst. The order of arguments is another department in which blundering is very common. Some follow the advice of several writers on preaching by packing their feeble arguments into the middle of their train, a course which has only one thing said in its favour, that it presents a somewhat bolder front at first glance; but this is hardly a compensation for the disappointment of the hearer, who finds the bold front give way to the array of feebleness which follows, and becomes so impatient with the symptoms of decline in strength, that his attention is not to be recovered when the stronger arguments are produced at the close. Far better is it to follow the natural order of thought, rising from the weaker to the stronger. The greatest difficulty in this process to untrained minds is, that they dwell upon the common-place and obvious to such a length as to preclude the possibility of bringing out their stronger or less familiar arguments into full effectiveness, and thus an air of general feebleness is given to the entire. This can only be obviated by a due subordination of the parts to each other, according to their relative importance—a work which requires much labour and patience, but which repays the labourer in the greater disciplined ability realized, and the increased facility of action in each repetition of the work; while the finished product of his labour will be felt to all time to be a true growth and not a mere aggregation of unrelated thoughts.

This leads naturally to the subject of unity as an end to be sought in every

discourse. All writers on rhetoric have urged this as essential, and in no form of discourse is it so much neglected as in the sermon. When the lawyer rises to speak he has an end in view—the interest of his client—the gaining of his cause. When the politician speaks he has his subject defined, and is bound to speak upon it. The lecturer or orator has a defined subject to elucidate, or a definite effect to produce, and each feels limited by their conditions. But the preacher too often seems not to think of unity of subject, unity of design, or unity of effect. He takes up some topic on which he can say something, not because his soul is pressed with some work to be done or end to be sought; but because he is expected at a certain time to make a public appearance, and acquit himself as best he can. It cannot be denied that in the present day the frequency of public engagements interferes far too much with the time, and taxes far too much the powers of the preacher, for him to have much opportunity of devoting attention to the higher departments of his art; but due attention to this topic of unity would enable him to concentrate his forces so as to bring them to bear with greater effect on the occasions of his public appearance. Sometimes he has a perfect unity in his subject. Suppose this to be the doctrine of justification by faith, he has to explain its nature, to prove its truth, to defend it against objectors, and to press its consideration on the hearts of his hearers; but the theme is one throughout, and if it is well discussed the impressions will be distinct on the minds of attentive hearers, that sinners are pardoned and accepted by faith alone in Jesus Christ; and if any are awakened under the word, their one cry will be for this pardon. Sometimes he has a particular design. He wishes to force this conviction upon sinners, that sin cannot escape detection and punishment. He selects for his text “Be sure your sin will find you out.” He may introduce every variety of consideration to prove the point, from the omniscience of God and the benevolence of his government, which demands the punishment of the sinner in order to the continuance of the happiness of his loyal subjects, through all the details of fact from Achan and David down to the last detected murderer; but however varied the character of illustrations, from the highest abstractions to the nearest and most familiar of facts; however varied his modes, reasoning, narrative, fancy denunciation, or pleading—all tends to the realization of his design. As, at another time, he may wish to produce a given effect, and may so hit a text that at first glance seems to possess any other character than that of unity. He may preach a missionary sermon from 1 Tim. iii. 16, designed to stimulate the Church of God to engage in the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Here the text contains a vast variety of topics; but the thoughtful student sees them all rising into a grand unity for the production of his effect. He asks, What is the order of this portion of Scripture? and he finds that the first step is an infinite descent, but every succeeding step is an elevation, with glory for a climax. He asks what is the design of all? and he finds that there is one end toward which every part bears a primary relation—the salvation of mankind. For this “God was manifest in the flesh;” for this He was “vindicated by the Spirit;” “convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” On account of its bearing on this end it has fixed the wondering and adoring gaze of angels; in order to this He “is preached unto the Gentiles;” this is realized in his being “believed on in the world;” and to secure this in its utmost extent He is “received up into glory,” that from his high throne, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,” he may use all the powers and control all the events of the universe for its accomplishment: while the thought

of angelic study of the mystery, and angelic association with the Christian Church, capable of contrasting the love of the incarnate God with the coldness of love and the lowness of devotion in us, acts as a stimulus to urge us to a higher consecration and a more fervent zeal. Thus, amidst diversity of topics of the grandest character, a unity reigns, which only needs to be thoroughly grasped to enable the preacher to subordinate all the topics to his main design; and whether he expounds, or reasons, or proves, or soars to the altitudes of varied themes on the wings of imagination, the effect which he seeks to produce governs the whole presentation of the truth, and is as perfectly attained as if his topic had been as single as his end.

There is one subject which claims a notice in this place, and in relation to this topic, which may seem to be a digression, though all important in considering the manner of preaching—and I may be pardoned for introducing it more at large, as it does not occupy so large a space as I could desire in the following volume—I mean expository preaching. It is usually thought that it is adverse to the unity for which we plead; but this, if it were even true, would be a poor argument against its use, when we consider its great advantages. That it is not true will be shown in the sequel.

By expository preaching I mean not a slovenly rambling over a whole chapter in a few minutes, indicating that the speaker is just uttering the chance thoughts that have risen in the course of his public reading. Such a course of "remarks" may have a little value for the most ignorant of the flock; or if uttered by a man of eminent ability and piety, who is a close student of the word, may be profitable to all; but as ordinarily practised nothing can be more offensive to the thoughtful and cultured mind than these chance outpourings; and especially when they are so interspersed throughout the reading of the Scriptures, as that, except from the marked inferiority of the matter and style, there is nothing to separate them from the living word itself; and there is danger that the unintelligent, not having their Bibles in their hands, may be led to mistake the miserable drivel for the lessons of inspiration. The Bible should be held sacred from this mingling with human authority, and should be read through without a word interposed. It is surely not asking too much of the vain interpolator, that God should be permitted sometimes to speak without his aid; and it is surely not claiming too much for God to suppose that He can order his speech for spiritual effect with as much of wisdom as any of his commentators. An obsolete word, or an incorrect or obscure translation, may require explanation or rectification, as the reader passes on; but even in such a case it is necessary to make such a pause as shall separate most broadly between the divine and the human. There are many who can see no harm in the practice we condemn—nay, many who are ardent admirers of it; but we have never met them among the intelligent and refined, who, as a rule, shrink with loathing from the irreverent operation. If the lessons read in the public services of the sanctuary (which should always be ample for the advantage of the poor and the busy, who have not the power or the inclination to read for themselves,) require any comment, it is better that it should come at the close, when the whole passage can be seen in its entirety, and the lesson or comment can produce its full effect, from the fact that all the incidents, arguments, or appeals are present to the mind. It appears to me that if a book of Scripture, or well selected portions of some book were treated in this way in the course of Scripture reading—not on every Sabbath, lest it might become uniform and tedious,

besides unduly lengthening the services, but so occasionally as not to be too seldom—a great gain would arise to both preacher and hearers.

But by expository preaching I mean the full and elaborate exposition of some book or selected section of Scripture in sermons, whose prime object should be to bring out all the truth contained in each individual portion in its relations with the whole context, and in due subordination according to the relative importance of its contents. This exposition should be founded upon the most rigid and elaborate investigation of the original Scriptures; the most careful inquiry into all the historical and chronological relations; the geographical and social conditions; the manners and customs of the age and country, and the peculiar circumstances connected with the portion of Scripture to be expounded, together with all the aid which can be rendered by observation and science—mental, moral, and physical. It is not meant that the preacher should parade all his array of instrumental learning and research before the eyes of his audience, but that this production should exhibit the presence of all in its clearness, fulness, and mastery. The introduction of “the tools into the finished workmanship,” as Dr. Watts speaks, “is a blunder which no skilled workman commits;” and we fear it is the commission of this blunder, by the introduction of a great parade of learning and criticism, which has made exposition so unpopular as it is. There is no doubt also that, in congregations accustomed to the light flitting from topic to topic, which occurs in our present miscellaneous method of exhibiting divine truth, there is an inertness begotten of inattention, and a consequent indisposition to take sufficient pains to follow the preacher in a thoroughly expository course. But the thing may be made successful notwithstanding, and its great advantages to the ministry and the Church of God should lead all young ministers to an earnest devotion to the work, that they may learn how to make such a course of preaching interesting and effective.

The first advantage is to the minister himself. In the hurry of public life there are, I fear, comparatively few who deliberately study through whole books of sacred Scripture for their own private edification. Perhaps they have very pleasant memories of the exegetical exercise at college, while some remember it only with revulsion; but even among the former, few are found to prolong the pleasure. How great, then, would the advantage to the minister become, if at several periods of his ministerial life, he should be led to take up some historical book, or Epistle, or Gospel, to analyze it, to examine critically the force of its every word and particle; to consider the relations of the whole, and its grand harmonies with the entire body of Divine truth of which it is a member; and then, reversing the process, to become the instructor of others in that which had so enthralled and delighted him. Every faculty of his mind would be called into exercise in such a process, grander views of divine truth would be communicated, modifications of cherished crudities and half-thoughts would be produced, proof-texts of varied doctrines would shine out in a new lustre and rise in increased value in the course of study, while others, to which ignorance had assigned that rank, would sink into their proper place. God's thought would become regnant, and the narrowness of human dogmatism would give way to the breadth of the Divine wisdom. Every thorough and careful expositor has found after a few years that his own mind has attained to a far greater biblical richness, and that however reluctant the people were at the beginning to give the necessary attention, they became more and more interested as he proceeded, because he himself had risen with his work.

But its advantages to the public are great. The first and most obvious is the instruction in Divine truth which it imparts. They are accustomed to hear all things treated without order, and without order are they jumbled together in their minds. It would astonish any minister by its absurdity in this respect, to look over the variety and succession of subjects which have occupied him for a quarter of a year. He has preached, let us say, forty sermons to the same people; he has touched upon almost every topic of theology, yet he has treated nothing exhaustively, so that the people may have a complete conception of it as a doctrine; and in not two cases have the topics followed each other in the order of natural succession. What should we think of a lecturer on science who should treat his subject in the same disorderly manner; or what should we think of a museum of natural history where the various families and species were mingled in such confusion? It is true that preaching is not scientific lecturing, and that the Bible is not written like a treatise on theology. It is also true that preaching aims rather at the production of a divine life than a divine science. But while these truths are allowed, we have yet to learn that it is right to neglect the most effective way of teaching in a department of life and action, in which, by Divine ordinance, *teaching* holds a foremost place; and we are far from being convinced that life can be produced in greater perfection through the truth when that truth is presented in the most disadvantageous manner. There is a difference between the divine order of thought and the human. The Bible is not like a scientific treatise with its array of definitions and propositions, and its concatenated chains of arguments. It rather resembles the material with which a science is occupied, scattered about in apparent confusion, but in real order, that man may exercise upon them his powers of abstraction and generalization. The palm and the pine are both beautiful, but the same region of earth will not produce them. The apple and the orange are both grateful and refreshing, but they have their different habitats. And the mountain-ash hangs out its brilliant berries in a zone of earth where the luscious fig could never grow. This is the Divine order, and it is beautiful. The stately pine is suited to keep solemn watch over Alpine solitudes; the rounded and lofty elm is a fitting ornament to the rich and fertile fields of England; and the vine serves in its native lands the double use of beauty and utility, as it hangs its graceful festoons over the rock, or yields its refreshing juice to man's necessity. The science of the botanist differs somewhat from the local order of the Divine Creator, but each serves its purpose; and this may teach the preacher the advantage of sometimes adopting a course of theological discourses in which the human order of thought is followed, and sometimes a course of exposition in which the Divine is prominent; but order to the fullest possible extent should be observed if men are to receive instruction from God's word, to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There is another advantage in the completeness and fulness of the instruction conveyed. In ordinary preaching many topics of Divine revelation are left untouched. The preacher has not made them his study, they do not specially interest him, or they are supposed to be of minor consequence, and not sufficiently important to form the subject of a sermon. The result is that many things never find a place in the ministration of the sanctuary which God has thought worthy of a place in his revelation, and although *all* Scripture is profitable, the people of God are compelled to content themselves with a part. This could not be if exposition were more general. Sometimes the omitted topics may be among the most

important for the minister's work. Mr. Bridges mentions that on one occasion he was led, in the course of exposition to a country congregation, to speak of divorce—a topic on which he would never have thought of preaching—and it led to important and delightful results. So, at times, there is some grave error of practice among a people, or some person may be acting very wrongly, and the preacher does not wish to signalize it by taking a special text from which to preach against it; but in a course of exposition he is almost sure to come upon it, when, without awakening hostility, he can rebuke the error or correct the wanderer, in the ordinary course of his ministry. Relative duties form a large portion of Divine revelation; but how rarely do they occur in the ordinary course of preaching! Let a minister expound the first Epistle of Peter, or the Epistle to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, or to Titus, and they all arise; and if a judicious use is made of the opportunity, everything pertaining to family life, which is the very foundation of our whole social fabric, may be treated so as to produce effects of the most blessed and enduring character. Many a man has been reached by a shaft proceeding from the full quiver of an expository course, who would have encased himself in invulnerable armour if he had seen the preacher choosing out his dart for special aim.

A few things need to be said in conclusion. Exposition should never be dry, and critical, and formal. We should never take too much time for recapitulation—a process to which the lazy resort—but with great brevity recall our previous train of thought. Again, this need not always form our introductory portion, which may often be made more interesting and impressive by the introduction of some higher thought in which the preceding exposition and that which we are about to give find their unity, a thought which will be suitably followed by our recapitulation. We should not have our course too long, for which cause I would recommend sections of Scripture or short Epistles for full treatment; or, where a larger portion of Scripture is taken, the treatment should be more light and sketchy, only occasionally dwelling on some portions of greater prominence. On the whole I should recommend that the plan suggested above, of a book taken occasionally, say once in a fortnight, for this slighter treatment, should be connected with the preaching of short topical sermons in the same service; and that, at other times, sermons should be preached without this accompaniment; and at others, again, that sections of Scripture should seriously occupy us for some time in successive services on Sunday mornings or evenings. Such portions as the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of the Gospel according to John, the conversation with Nicodemus, and that with the woman of Samaria; the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, or the 4th and 5th chapters of the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, or the Lord's prayer, or the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, to name no more, would afford ample scope for a considerable amount of strictly expository preaching, profitable to the people and greatly advancing the minister's acquaintance with the riches of God's truth. Of course, it is understood, throughout all these remarks, that the most diligent study is essential to the success of this work, that it is not by a hasty glance at Adam Clarke, or Matthew Henry, or Thomas Scott, that a man can become a true and useful expositor; but that, beyond all other methods of preaching, this requires the most diligent study and the greatest wakefulness of mind, that it may not degenerate into slovenliness, or become mere pointless explanation of a meaning which is never urged home on the heart and conscience. If the time wasted by many ministers in seeking after texts upon which they feel themselves able to preach, were but devoted to exegetical studies,

their ministry would be vastly richer than it is. As specimens of judicious exposition, needing to be somewhat irradiated by the light of imagination, and coloured by the hues of fancy, I would name the works of the late Dr. John Brown ; and, as possessing what his uncle lacked, the exposition of Christ's valedictory discourse by John Brown Paterson ; and as a specimen of the intuitive and penetrating style, the lectures of F. W. Robertson on Corinthians. Many of his sermons, too, are expository, and if he had possessed more knowledge of theology, and had more strictly endeavoured to follow out the laws of exegesis, he would have been the highest model I know of this kind of preaching.

Reasoning should occupy a considerable place in our preaching. As a rule people like reasoning, if it is clear and solid. Samuel Drew, in giving a description of the early preaching of Adam Clarke to an illiterate people, has admirably discriminated this style:—"He forced upon us no dogmas, but he set us a thinking and reasoning because he thought and reasoned with us himself." It would be difficult to describe an efficient preacher better in fewer words. One of the most important parts of the preacher's work is to awaken attention to divine truth. When that is accomplished half the battle is fought. But reasoning materially aids in arousing it, whether by antagonism or curiosity, and if the preacher bears the message of truth, it is almost secured a lodgement in the attentive mind. Besides, if we can prove any doctrine or duty by acute connected train of argument, we have shut our hearers up to it, their understandings are on our side, and we are on the high road to their consciences. Hence we find that men who adopt this method of preaching, although they may possess very little of the lighter attractions, and may be disliked by the light-minded, are always attended by large numbers of the most thoughtful people, and are eminently owned of God. Most writers on preaching recommend a great simplicity, and this is thought to be opposed to the practice we now recommend, as if reasoning on divine things from Scripture, and conscience, and common human experience, and the admissions of godless men, may not be the very simplest of operations. But simplicity, as it is called, may be carried too far, so as to produce contempt for the preacher, and sometimes for his message. Who has not heard contemptuous judgments uttered by the retiring crowd after some miserable operation on divine truth has vulgarized it by a perverted and misunderstood simplicity ? Richard Baxter, who, above all men, secured and was bent on winning souls, recommends ministers frequently to preach on some of the highest and most difficult themes, for the purpose of showing the people that the truth is so high above them, and that it is not the preacher's want of ability to treat these themes that prevents their understanding them, but their own want of capacity. We think we can almost discern a quiet twinkle of humour passing over his grave, earnest face as he thought of the high imaginations that would thus be cast down, making the hearer listen for the future with a more humble reverence to the preacher, with heartfelt satisfaction at the effect of the same in his reception of the message. As a matter of experience I can say, that the most marked spiritual effects I have witnessed have been in connection with the most strenuous intellectual efforts on the highest themes of Christian thought ; and other things being equal, such will always be the experience of every preacher. The man who thinks that God especially acknowledges frothy declamation and rant, seems, to say the least, to pay little respect to his character ; and he who thinks that anything he can get up in a few minutes will be more sure of the Spirit's inspiration than the thoughts of days, is possessed by a strange forgetfulness of the word of Him who has said, "Study to shew

thyself approved unto God ; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." In these days—when, at every Sunday school meeting, we hear good, but certainly not thoughtful men, informing us that nothing can benefit which is not thoroughly comprehended, and that we must therefore preach down to children's capacities, or they must be removed from all the hallowing influences of examples of worship, and gathered into "separate services," where they are talked to childishly and kept in quiet by the menaces of the teachers—a word needs to be said on the higher style which the pulpit should adopt at times. It is not true that no subject profitably affects the mind except that which is fully comprehended, for then none could affect it at all, seeing that none is so comprehended. Its untruth is still more fully seen in the fact, that the themes which soar furthest above all human comprehension are those which most powerfully affect us. Who comprehends the majesty of God ? and yet it awes and subdues. Who understands the depth of the Saviour's anguish when the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" and yet it has the greatest power to melt the heart. The favourite maxim of these worthy, but unthinking, men is just the contrary of the truth. If we would treat worthily of the highest things, as worthily as man may, we must speak in an exalted strain ; we must reason high ; if we choose to speak in the manner prescribed by our self-constituted monitors, we shall only belittle the great, and earn for ourselves the scorn of the intelligent, without winning the ignorant and elevating the low. But let us not make the mistake that all our sermons must be reasoning at the beginning, middle, and end, or that to reason high is to produce ambitious compositions in technical or inflated language, or to be cold and statesque in manner, as if we were mere logic-grinders. If our reasoning is to effect its end it must be in intelligible language, and a suitable style, and we should remember Foster's saying about logic being wrought in fire as well as in frost. The celebrated French preacher, Bourdalouë, was an argumentative preacher ; every sermon of his is a chain of reasoning, but it is reasoning set on fire with zeal, and mighty through its union with unction ; and his popularity continued through a period of about 40 years in the fickle and frivolous capital of France in its most frivolous time.

We have just touched the subject of style, and to that our attention may be for a moment profitably directed. The meaning of this term is not confined to the mere terms the speaker uses to convey his thought, although they are included ; but to the manner in which he uses them. It relates to the whole disposition of words in a sentence, the disposition of sentences in a paragraph, and the disposition of paragraphs in a section or treatise. The best thoughts may be lost for want of a suitable mode of communication, while a good style may sometimes gain undue attention for thoughts light and unworthy. More than anything else it depends upon the mind, and is little affected by rules, especially such rules as are commonly given. The general characteristics of a good preaching style may be expressed in three words. It should be *clear*, *rich*, and *strong*—a division almost corresponding with Milton's description of poetry—"simple, sensuous, passionate." It corresponds fully with the three ends proposed in all public speech—to instruct, to please, to move. If the style is not clear the first end is not attained ; if it is not rich, the second fails ; if it is not strong, it does not conquer. This is the division of Augustine in the fourth book of his treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, to the translation of which, in the "Essays on the Christian Ministry," I would refer the reader who has the misfortune not to know Latin, or not to possess the richest

of theological treasures in the works of this great man. That a style may be clear, it is necessary that the words should be intelligible, that the speaker should know his subject, and that he should give attention to the order of his thoughts. The use of hard words arises from a desire to mystify, or a bad taste, unless they are technical terms necessary for the expression of the thought; perhaps in some cases they are the result of the speaker's own incapability clearly to apprehend the subject. As a rule whenever a man understands a subject thoroughly, and has enjoyed the advantage of competent mental discipline, he can speak of it clearly. Richness of style depends also upon the mind's power and cultivation. It is commonly thought that in youth the mind puts forth the richest products of imagination and fancy, but this is only a popular delusion. In the lower class of good minds there is often a great exhibition of such power at an early period, and it is looked upon as a promise of a glorious day; but how numerous are the cases in which the promise is never fulfilled; while on the other hand the greater minds grow richer toward their close. Take a few of these selected at random. Milton's youth was grand, and his tracts on Reformation in England gave splendid promise; but the *Paradise Lost*, written in his maturity, leaves them far behind, and more than fulfils the splendid promise of his youth. The first edition of Bacon's essays is singularly wanting in that richness of poetic thought which characterizes the later editions; and no one will dream of comparing Burke's treatise on the "Sublime and Beautiful," the work of his early days, with the gorgeous splendour of his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, his *Letter to a noble Lord*, or his letters on a *Regicide Peace*. Byron's early "Hours of Idleness" were miserable in comparison with the depth, and beauty, and majesty of the last ten stanzas of "*Childe Harold*." These are but selections from a large list, illustrative of the same truth, that richness of style flows from richness of mind—from a large, accurate, and varied culture, producing fulness of knowledge and refinement of taste. In such a mind a broad basis of analogy is laid, and in vivid exercise its metaphors come unsought, its imagery starts forth from the chambers of imagination at the call of a great thought or a profound emotion, and all the effects of the highest poetry are produced. No one can read and study the best productions of Lord Macaulay without perceiving this, and the same is true of Shakespeare, Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thos. Brown, Edmund Burke, De Quincy, and all our great prose writers. These men did not produce mere purple patches of rhetoric or imagery to delight the eyes of the greatest educated; their beauties ministered to their end, and however numerous the flowers they scattered in their paths, they steadily kept their onward way. Such writings alone, in which beauty is the minister to utility, preserve their vigour and freshness through generations, and are re-produced long centuries after their authors are dead, while those which make mere beauty an end pass soon into deserved oblivion. It is only a poetic image which speaks of the diamond hilt lighting the passage of the blade, but it contains a great truth in the philosophy of style. If these opinions are true, they interpret the great saying of Buffon, "the style is the man;" showing that only such as the man is in fulness of knowledge and ripeness of culture can the style be; and they prove the utter futility of all mechanical instructions about forming a style. Milton has well expressed a portion of the thought in the following sentence:—"Whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy

servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places."

Strength in the style is preferable to elegance for the end the speaker has in view. In poetry it is supposed that, as pleasure is the chief object, beauty shall be predominant; but that beauty rarely lives in poetry which is not combined with strength. But in preaching the end of which is to persuade men to a certain course of action, strength should predominate. Archdeacon Hare's fine figure that "Oratory is the eye of the poet looking from beneath the helmet of the warrior" conveys a most just and beautiful distinction. Various rules have been laid down for producing this quality, but all are vain if they aim to reach it by mechanical means. Some have recommended conciseness, and it cannot be doubted that verbosity weakens; but excessive conciseness too may weaken by obscuring the thought, and if the thought is not seen all the force is lost. Antithesis has been recommended, but let any man try to produce antithesis by mechanical methods, and the result will be ridiculous. Some minds fall naturally into antithetic modes of expression, and in them, as natural, it is impressive; but nothing can be more pitiful than the attempt to produce such a style. There is a natural antithesis in thought, which, being realized fully in the mind, results in vigour of style, whether it appears in verbal form or not. The preacher has but to think strongly, and feel strongly as great thoughts compel him, and he must be utterly wanting to himself if he does not write and speak strongly. Let his utterance be weighted with true and great thoughts and powerful emotions, and feebleness will be the exception. But let not the thoughts be too many, or so closely packed, for the burden then becomes too great for the speaker's own mind, and altogether overwhelms the minds of his hearers, so that his labour is in vain. It is felt by all speakers and hearers that concrete terms are more forcible than abstract, substantives more forcible than adjectives, and verbs more forcible than adverbs. Too much qualification weakens even when it is intended to strengthen. I say nothing of words of Saxon and of Latin origin, about which so much nonsense has been written, both are in the English language, and each has its proper place. It may be said that, where Saxon words are sufficient they conduce most to clearness, often to strength, and very frequently to beauty; but their exclusive use would be simply folly and inefficiency. All our best writers show a predominance of Saxon, but they would not occupy the place they do, if they had given way to a narrow exclusiveness. I shall close this portion of my observations by two quotations bearing especially on this point. Dr. Whately in his *Rhetoric* says "A speaker or writer should endeavour to maintain the appearance of expressing himself, not as if he wanted to say something, but as if he had something to say." This, let me observe, is always best done when he has actually something to say, without which no "appearance" will ever avail. And in relation to the richness and beauty of style, I would leave as last words on every preacher's memory, the saying of Henry Kirke White "If any man ascend the pulpit with the intention of uttering a fine thing, he is committing a deadly sin." If the rich and beautiful are present, let them be means, not ends.

This leads naturally to another branch of the subject about which the most various opinions have been expressed. I refer to the subject of reading sermons, or delivering *extempore*, as it is called. It would be difficult to name any subject on which there has been a greater diversity of opinion expressed, or a more unfair or prejudiced method of expression adopted. The advocates of reading have discovered every kind of evil in extempore speech, while the advocates of the latter

cannot allow the readers to be preachers at all. If any one pleads for an extemporaneous style of preaching which discards all previous study, and meditation, and direct preparation for public speech, he pleads for that which no rightminded man has ever thought of. It may be possible for a man of rare ability, on a few occasions, to reach a great height of excellence in such a form of speech, when the subject is novel, and the occasion exciting, and his mind previously well cultured and ordered, but it would be impossible for the greatest genius in this world to make three or four appearances in the week before the same people on the themes of the Bible, in such unpremeditated style, without becoming very wearisome before the end of a year. It would not be possible for him to avoid repetitions of ideas and phrases so frequently that they would become cant terms to the audience. But this extreme is certainly not the kind of extempore preaching for which we plead, although it seems to be the only thing thought of by the inveterate reader. There is another style, where the preacher having selected his text examines its every phrase and word, carefully notes their generic and specific meanings, considers the various modifications to which they are subject, examines then his text in the light of its context, and considers its particular meaning in relation to the whole scope of the discourse of which it forms a part. Then, having ascertained this meaning, he sets himself to present it to his congregation—to expound, prove, illustrate, and apply it; and, having framed the entire conception in his mind, proceeds to commit the whole course of thought to paper in due order, expanding his arguments from the original germ-form, elaborating his illustrations, and so articulating his whole discourse that it lies as a complete whole before him; then by diligent re-perusal, supplying deficiencies, correcting hasty thoughts and expressions, perhaps altering the arrangement if the whole is faulty, he ends by re-absorbing the whole, in its matured and corrected form, into his mind; and goes without his paper, but with a thorough knowledge of the whole subject, and of its various parts, to reproduce it livingly under those peculiar impulses which are produced by the earnest gaze of a thousand eyes into his own, and those blessed aids of the Spirit of God which often suggest, under the hallowed excitement of the hour, thoughts, illustrations, and emotions, such as would never have been found under the highest spiritual and mental excitement possible in the solitude of the study. Such a mode of preaching possesses all the advantages of the most carefully written composition, with those higher advantages of freedom to admit every holy thought suggested, and to utter every new emotion in the form which is spontaneously imparted to it. This is the extempore speech for which I plead, as the most generally effective form of Christian preaching, as well as the most difficult of attainment. It demands that the thinking shall be done as if it were for the press, that the writing shall be done with all the care, though not with all the fulness, which reading would demand; and that when all this is done, the words of the composition shall not fetter the speaker, but only find expression as they may possess a complete suitability to his more elevated tone of feeling, and never be sought after as essential; and that the frame of thought shall be so flexible and expansive that it will open to receive the new, or even give place to the more vigorous or better adapted style of thinking which the higher inspiration of the period of delivery shall excite.

It may be that the minuter beauties of style cannot find a place in this mode of preaching, that delicate shades of expression which were present to the writer, and are in the manuscript, are lost to the speaker and his audience, and that there is a probability that thoughts may be left out which are essential to the completeness

of the whole. There is no doubt that such a style will generally be liable to these objections, that it will want the perfect finish which is possible in the composition written for the pulpit, and that it will admit the more frequent iteration of the same phrases ; but it remains to be proved that these are more than imaginary disadvantages. The minuter beauties are rarely seen or appreciated by an audience as a whole, and the few who can appreciate them could generally exchange them for something more vigorous in tone. The more delicate shades of expression, as of thought, will not so generally escape the mind of the man who trains himself for the exercise as I have suggested ; and if there is sometimes a slip of the memory, it is not felt to be of much consequence, as the discourse is only heard, and the mind is steadily occupied with the present utterance, and generally the omission indicates that the omitted thought was not essential ; besides, the possibility of such omission may be prevented by the preacher bringing a written plan into the pulpit with him. Such a plan, however, I do not recommend, as it too often generates more stiffness than the entire manuscript.

But while I plead for this kind of extemporizing, and rigidly insist upon this measure of preparation for it, I am far from utterly condemning reading. There may be great occasions before which the most courageous man would quail without the confidence which the presence of his manuscript imparts. There may be subjects of great difficulty, with which a speaker would be unwilling to match himself ; but which he does not fear to treat in the form of reading. Those ministers whose occasional services are very frequently required, and who in the nature of things cannot produce new sermons for every occasion, or have the time requisite for reviving the thought and feeling on each occasion, which are essential to their effective delivery, may use the manuscript with great advantage to themselves and their audience ; but it does appear to me that, except occasionally, it is a mistake to use it in the ordinary ministrations of a pastor among his own flock. Many barely tolerate it, because they think that their fare would be poorer without it. Others profess to admire it, because they wish to seem to be persons of peculiarly good taste. But as a rule, it is the earnest desire of many of the most intelligent and pious that they could listen to a man speaking to them earnestly and thoughtfully without the absorbing presence of the paper.

Even in the quality of the article produced, the plan I recommend would be an advantage. It seems never to occur to those who constantly condemn all other modes of preaching than reading, that the time occupied in the mere act of writing might in many cases be more profitably occupied in study and research. Let a minister compose fully and carefully two sermons in the week, each to occupy the usual period of about forty minutes in delivery, and he will find it impossible, except under very favourable conditions, to do the mere mechanical work of writing them in less than two days. Of course, if they are to be rich in thought, time must be spent in its collection, and it is most desirable that that time should be as much extended as possible. Besides, even if we allow the working hours of a day to the composition of each sermon, it does not give sufficient time for that beauty and polish of style on account of which the system of reading sermons is so constantly pleaded for. The writing can be at best only extempore, and possess but little advantage over extempore speech ; while the disadvantage of the time occupied in its execution being largely lost from more important pursuits, is very considerable. Suppose a sermon were written on the principle I recommend, leaving the plainer and easier expository portions denoted only by what are called catch-words, and only elaborating those portions where argument is stated or illus-

tration expanded, let it be of such length as to require about twenty minutes to read, admitting of expansion into forty minutes in delivery, and it will be obvious that the time required for such composition will not be even the half of that required for the other form, while more pains can be taken with the portions specially elaborated. This will answer every end of full consideration of the subject, careful composition, and free, lively delivery. As to the common objection of iteration of phrases and words, it is far from being an evil, unless excessive, and the extempore writer is even more liable to it than the extempore speaker.

The next matter to which attention must be drawn is *delivery*, this (not action as it has been erroneously translated) was what Demosthenes declared to constitute the first, second, and third qualifications for an orator. Its vast importance can hardly be overrated. The utmost that I can say here concerning it is that it should be true, that the manner of speech and action should harmonize with the matter delivered, and that if the speaker attends to what he is saying and not to the saying of it, he will render his thought truly, unless he has contracted some bad habits,—a common case, which can only be cured by the attention of a competent instructor. Most earnestly, however, would I caution students against systems of elocution and mouthing elocutionists, who teach by empirical rules, and sacrifice all propriety of utterance for a manner destitute of all truth. It is most pitiful to hear a man preach or read the Scriptures who does not seem to know or think of rendering their meaning, thinking of his voice, when he should think of the thought, and express it; or sometimes trying to be energetic and tearing a passion to tatters; or declaiming on the love of God, with a look at his manuscript as if he were about to tear it into atoms; or at some special passage, which he wishes to make specially emphatic, drawing back in the pulpit, extending both his hands, and sawing the air up and down, just after the fashion in which we have seen an old lady express her astonishment. Perhaps the action is natural, and they are astonished at their own great genius; but we confess that it is a matter of unfeigned astonishment that sensible men can do it, and that others can tolerate it. Good delivery can scarcely ever be expected while reading sermons continues to be practised. As a rule the delivery of lawyers and the abler members of Parliament is better, because in their case reading is not tolerated.

The length of a sermon is a debated question. It is clear that it can never be decided by the application of any unvarying rule. Sometimes the occasion is of great importance, and its gravity demands and creates the expectation of more than usual length; although, even in such cases, undue length is felt and resented. Sometimes a great subject demands to be treated as a whole, and cannot be dismissed in the time required for a subject of less extent and importance. But in the ordinary course of the ministry experience teaches that about forty minutes is the utmost tolerable limits; and if a preacher can only command or make time to reduce his homily to thirty-five or thirty, he would hear only the most good-humoured fault-finding with his brevity. There are, it is true, some fussy, restless people, who are not capable of taking in much thought, who would wish a sermon reduced to twenty minutes; but if their minister will come to that term this year, they will still grumble unless he will reduce it to fifteen the next. No preacher, however, can stand against the current of popular opinion. The time of Puritan eight hour services is past, and toleration for long prayers and long sermons has passed with it.

But little space remains for treating of the last subject,—the preparation for the work of preaching. The greatest master of eloquence among the ancients, who

also wrote upon the practice of the art, was convinced that no knowledge was foreign from the orator's purpose. In his treatise *De Oratore*, Cicero says "In my opinion, indeed, no man can be an orator possessed of every praiseworthy accomplishment, unless he has attained the knowledge of all great things and of every liberal art ; for his discourse must be rendered ornate and copious by knowledge ; since unless there is beneath the surface matter understood and felt by the speaker, oratory becomes an empty and almost puerile flow of words."* This is certainly placing before the preacher a high and difficult standard of attainment ; but if the pleader at the bar, or the orator in the senate, or the public speaker in any department, who desires to impress the mind of his age, submits to excessive labour and severe discipline in order to qualify himself for a lower work, it would be strange if those who are engaged in the highest service—the service of a Master who makes self-denial the first condition of our discipleship—should consider themselves discharged from this severity of discipline in the prosecution of their object. Rather, when we consider the love we profess, the aid from on high which we are permitted to ask and to expect, and the high ends for which we are called to labour, we should embrace toil as a bride, and count labour joy in such a service.

Every man has his favourite studies, to which from its nature, constitution, and tendency his mind inclines ; and these must not be neglected. But it is obvious to every one who has attended to his own culture that the exclusive devotion of the mind to these has a tendency to make it partial, and to that extent, to warp and dwarf it. A good rule in each case would be to give ordinary attention to that which is our favourite—it will always exact as much as it can beyond, and the tendency which makes it our favourite will feed upon all else besides—but to devote special attention to those things which are not so easy or so delightful to us. An exception may perhaps be made in the case of studies which are supposed to be equally valuable as means of discipline, although one of them may not be equally needful or useful for our future studies or engagements. We may adduce as instances classics and mathematics, or mathematics and metaphysics. I shall not enter into the controversy which has long raged with very unphilosophical heat on the relative disciplinary value of those studies ; for I presume it will be universally admitted that for the work of a Christian minister classics and metaphysics are more immediately important than mathematics ; and, other things in those studies being equal, and time and power not being sufficient for the attainment of all, these should claim his first regard. Notwithstanding this, we should always remember that the hardest work is that which ultimately rewards the student most, and that the day is coming when he will look back upon the most strenuous exertions of his intellect with the most intense pleasure.

Amongst the studies which I would specially press upon the attention of all preachers, classics should occupy the foremost place. No man is at the present time regarded as an educated man who has not an acquaintance to some extent with those products of literary perfection that for centuries have been distinguished by that name ; and it is to be hoped that the day is far distant when they shall cease to hold the foremost place in the education of men for public life. Those antique peoples, the productions of whose best writers now hold this honoured place amongst us, seem to have possessed elements of character, physical, intellectual, and moral, which have almost died out of the race. Their productions possess characteristics which place them apart from all others. Whether we take the

* Lib. I. Cap. 6, Sec. 20.

mellifluous elastic Greek with such wonderful capacity of combination, such power of expressing thoughts the most subtle, grand, or beautiful in language that has the liberal ease and grace of nature in its forms and combinations, or that more cold, stately, and statuesque form of utterance which belonged to the Latin race, we find in their extant writings almost every form of literary excellence, in poetry or in prose—an excellence which remains the wonder and despair of all future ages. What exemplars of every form of poetry! What lucid, vigorous, and rhythmic prose! Almost every thing which belongs to the art of rhetoric can be studied in any one of these writers, whether prose or poetic. It appears to me among the finest exercises of mental discipline to study the beauty and clearness of their divisions, the order of their paragraphs, the structure of their sentences, their exquisite choice of words, and the fine shadings of meaning in their synonyms; and yet all come forth with such a graceful flow that they seem to have fallen from their lips and pens without an effort. To be able to construe a classical writing is the foundation of all subsequent attainment, but yet it is the lowest. To be able to analyze it grammatically and rhetorically is an advance. To read it in superior English is higher still. But no man will ever derive all the advantage possible from a classic, except by that course which has been recommended by Cicero, and since his time practised and recommended by all great orators and writers—that of frequent translation and comparison with the best exemplars. The contact of the mind with a great author, whose thoughts breathe and whose words burn, communicates some of his life and warmth to us. That close and laborious contact which transfusion of his thought into our own language gives, quickens our whole being, leads to the selection of the choicest expressions, and gives to our own composition a grandeur and accuracy which it would never possess but for the conflict and contrariety of idiom which the exercise involves. It was this kind of study of the classics that formed the men who have created our own magnificent literature.

If I may venture further on this subject I would remind the young preacher of the help which a familiarity with the classic tongues will yield in all his studies. Plato and Aristotle, the fountains of all philosophy and science, can only be fully known in Greek. Homer has never been translated, though often *translated*;—the life and spirit of the old Ionian singer must be sought in the original. The same remark is applicable to many more. But it should never be forgotten by us that the Scriptures of the New Covenant have been written in this tongue, and that it is the distinct work of the preacher's life to unfold the meaning of these Scriptures and to enforce their truths. No man can do this with authority when he draws his knowledge at second hand from commentators, but when he speaks the results of his personal investigation. Whatever our hearers may do with translations, ministers, at least, should read the New Testament in the original, critically, and with ease. We should remember also that the early Christian writers used the classic tongues as their vernacular, that in them are embodied the early apologies and history, that through them the fresh and vigorous Christian eloquence flows forth from the newly-awakened heart of mankind, and that if a man would place himself in contact with the most vital and inspiring ages of Christian life, thought, and utterance, he must possess the power of reading for himself the works of Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Eusebius, and Chrysostom, together with those of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. It should not be forgotten also that the laborious results of the scholastic thought, and the most patient, exhaustive, fruitful, and unwearied—though often wearying—labours of the post-reformation

divines of Holland are locked up in the Latin tongue. Our own age is bringing increasingly to light a truth which was familiar to the Christian thinkers of the second and third centuries—the relation of revelation to the expression of man's want in the highest literature of the civilized nations before Christianity. But in order rightly to comprehend that relation, and, free from the narrowness of one school and the extravagance of another, to ascertain how Christianity is the answer of Heaven to the cry of earth, we must possess the power of reading with pleasure the remains of classical literature. On account, then, of the instruction it yields, the disciplined energy it imparts, and the inspiration it breathes, I would earnestly press upon the coming ministry the cultivation of classical studies.

From this the transition is easy to ecclesiastical history. This is of supreme importance to ministers, both as Christians and as theologians. It leads us back to the origin of our faith, and it traces the outflow of that faith into the world from its first apparently feeble beginning to its present acceptance and place of power. But it does more than this. To the attentive observer it shows how thought has been affected by life, and life by thought; how speculation has marred the beauty and withered the energies of the faith at various times. It shows how the dogmas which we accept to-day as the pure utterance of the Scriptures have been framed, and tortured, and changed times without number. It shows, in the occasional revivals which its pages exhibit, the direct and wondrous action of God, and proclaims in the ears of the devout student as loudly as the Divine Book itself, that man mars all that he touches, and that it is only God himself who sustains his Church against the enmity of hell, and the yet more dangerous friendship of earth. The history of doctrines constitutes an important part of the knowledge of the theologian, and enables him more fully to understand each part of theology in its relation to the whole; and this can only be learned by the full and accurate study of ecclesiastical history. The student will not be guilty of passing by the learned and elaborate elder work of Mosheim, or the pious, though practical, production of Milner; but he who would more fully enter into the life of the Church must study the great work of Neander, examine with care the abundant notes of Gieseler, and peruse the brilliant, extensive, but rather cold, volumes of Dean Milman. These at the least. He who masters them needs no direction from me in his further studies. Of fragments in this department of history I may be permitted to commend to special attention the two works of Schaff and the four volumes of De Pressensé, the latter casting all other writings on the same subject into the shade. On doctrine-history the works of Hagenbach and of Neander are available in English, and I am happy to name the able, well-arranged, and eloquently written volumes of Professor Shedd.

Before leaving this subject there is one department of this study which I must earnestly urge upon you—the study of the early fragments of Christian history and thought. Just now the grand assault upon Christianity relies on the dimness of Christian knowledge respecting the character of that period which extends from the destruction of Jerusalem to the time of the Antonines—the period during which the canon of the New Testament was mainly formed, and some of its later portions written. Not only has the scepticism of Germany long occupied this ground, but France has recently entered upon it, and some of their writers, on account of their genius and the beauty of their style, are becoming known among us. It becomes us to be able, from our own knowledge of the literature of this period, to meet the falsehoods and blasphemies, which, under the high-sounding name of criticism, are already invading us, and against which we have no native

literature to enable us to contend. The Christian minister should make himself acquainted with all the complete works or fragments of that early period, and of that immediately succeeding. I am convinced, from personal inspection, of which I have elsewhere given some of the results, that there lie more illustrations of this period in the writings of Tertullian and Irenæus than have yet been given to the world. The work of Pressensé, above referred to, will be found very valuable in this inquiry.

I must now pass on to the recommendation of metaphysics, psychology, and logic—the first occupying itself with those necessary realities which remained unchanged amid all mutations of nature and man; the second, with the phenomenon of our own mental action; and the third, with the laws which must govern all our thoughts in the pursuit of truth. The Christian preacher above all men should be thoroughly acquainted with these sciences, as the best and highest intellectual preparation for the study of theology, and for the practical exercise of the ministry. He who is not familiar with them is suffering the most grievous disadvantage in his work. In the present day, when one able man—by his adherence to the main positions of the positive philosophy, and by the immense popularity which his writings have acquired at one of our seats of learning and with a large class of the reading community—threatens the very existence of metaphysics, we should not be faithful to ourselves or to the truth entrusted to us if we did not labour to acquire a mastery of that science which employs itself about the true realities, and the loss of which would soon leave us to the mere flitting phenomena of the moment, and, ere long, to the phenomena of matter alone. It may be said that the English people are not metaphysical, and that these things make but little impression upon them. What then? Even if we could believe this of the countrymen of Bacon and Locke, of Glanville, Collier, Norris, and Mansel—not to speak of the great northern host composed of Reed, Smith, Stewart, Brown, Hamilton, McCosh, and Fraser—we should only be the more earnest in the inculcation of such studies, for the danger of being lost in the mire of a dirt-philosophy is all the greater. The union of a high metaphysic with a true psychology, which is its only valid basis, and a logic which watches over all the mental processes, will steady the preacher's feet in all the paths of thought, light his way when it is open to him, and be a wall of adamant in his path when he attempts to transcend the limits prescribed to man. The service rendered by these sciences in teaching the limits of thought is one of the most important and essential at the present time, when we not only hear much about intuitions which determine a man's own course, but also of those which ambitiously presume to decide respecting God himself, what He must be, and what He must do. Whether we have to contend with the positivism of Mill, or with the hazy spiritualism of Maurice, we need alike the careful discipline and the accurate thought which the study of these sciences produces. The Christian preacher above all things stands in need of an accurate knowledge of psychology. He has to apply divine truth to man. That truth is adjusted to man's nature by the infinite wisdom of the author of both, and in order to the full understanding of the relations of the word to man, a knowledge of each is essential. So strong, indeed, are my convictions on this subject, that I hold it impossible for any man properly to understand the word of God without a competent acquaintance with the nature of the being to whom it is addressed. The same acquaintance is essential to the proper presentation of the truth when discovered; for unless the preacher knows the nature of the being to whom he addresses himself, how shall he rightly order his speech so as to produce

the desired effect? Much of the absurdity which repels thoughtful men from the preaching of many, and much of the aimless, ineffective discoursing which is the reproach of the pulpit would cease to exist if these studies held their proper place. And let it be remembered that we are not here recommending that knowledge of *men* which a worldly shrewdness inculcates. We by no means underrate this, which depends upon careful observation. But we recommend the knowledge of *man* as man apart from individual characteristics—the knowledge of those faculties and powers, intellectual, emotional, and moral, which belong alike to every man in different degrees, and which constitute the basis of his existence, out of which the individual peculiarities rise.

But the chief study of the minister, and that to which all others should be tributary, must be theology. This is his peculiar science, and whatsoever else he learns must be brought to bear upon its illustration. All his mathematical, metaphysical, and historical discipline and attainment will find their due place and exercise here. All the severity of grammatical analysis will be required for that exegetical process which evolves truth from the sacred words, and all the metaphysics and logic for the construction, on the basis of exegesis, of true systematic theology; while the knowledge of ecclesiastical history and dogma will need to be constantly applied as the square and the plumb-line of the builder to correct the individual tendency to error, and cause the structure of thought to rise fair and durable. It is a precious truth that every man must make a theology for himself; but then it must be made in the light of all the thinking of the past. I believe with Robinson “that God has yet much light to break forth from His holy word;” I believe also that that light when analyzed will not contain a single new ray. It will be no new thing, but only a greater intensity of the old. Let me then say to my younger brethren, Study, earnestly study, theology. Do not listen to the syren voice which whispers that it is old and dry. The theology of which I speak is the truth of God; your function is to proclaim that truth to men, your first duty is to learn it; and you will be traitors to yourselves and to your high calling if you do not resolve to be, so far as you have the power, above all things, theologians. You may be something besides, but this you must be. It is a sad thing to find a man set apart as a teacher of sacred truth, even after the advantages of collegiate instruction, incapable of answering a question about that every-day theology, which a faithful minister should never forget in his weekly ministrations. Such we have met, and their existence may, in part, account for that want of intelligent interest in these themes which so extensively prevails.

With regard to lighter pursuits, let me especially recommend to your perusal our best poetry. General literature is essential to every cultivated man, but poetry is the highest form of literature, the most beautiful, the most perfect artistically considered, and the most elevating. Its value to us, as well as its peculiar character, springs from that irrepressible longing of the soul so truly described by Bacon:—“The use of the *feigned history* hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety, than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, because the acts or events of *true history* have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, *poesy* feigneth acts and events greater and more heroic; because *true history* propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore *poesy* feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed

providence ; because true history representeth actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged, therefore poesy endueth them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations ; so as it appeareth that poesy serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation. And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and exert the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind ; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things.* Poetry, moreover, interests us more deeply in man than any other form of literature. The scientific study which we have recommended is essential to a true conception of him, but endangers our interest in the object of discussion. It is analytical and abstract, while poetry brings him before us in his concrete personality, reveals his passions and affections in their full play, and his will in all its terrible grandeur. According to the common consent of critics, the highest order of poetry is the drama, because of its being pre-eminently the exhibition of all the varied phrases of man's wondrous nature. If the minister would be fully equipped for his great work, he must be a student of the highest poets, not merely indulging a reading of Longfellow, or Bailey, or Smith, but familiar with the greater masters, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Tennyson. He must read them often, not perfunctorily, but lovingly, analyze the secret of their beauty and power, and imbibe their spirit. Converse with such great thinkers and singers, will help to purify and exalt his own thoughts and impulses, and Christian work will be nobler to him in proportion as he sees it shining in this high light.

But—having already passed my assigned limits—I must draw to a close by transcribing a passage on preaching from a writer whose rich and varied thought joined to a style of rare vividness, richness, and vitality should make him the study of all preachers. He is speaking on the decoration of pulpits, but such a writer cannot touch such a theme without passing on to something higher :—

“It is worth while pausing for a moment to consider how far the manner of decorating a pulpit may have influence on the efficiency of its service, and whether our modern treatment of this, to us all important, feature of a church be the best possible. When the sermon is good we need not much concern ourselves about the form of the pulpit. But sermons cannot always be good, and I believe the temper in which congregations set themselves to listen may be in some degree modified by their perception of fitness or unfitness, impressiveness or vulgarity, in the disposition of the place appointed for the speaker,—not to the same degree, but somewhat in the same way that they may be influenced by his own gesture or expression, irrespective of the sense of what he says. I believe, therefore, in the first place that pulpits ought never to be highly decorated ; the speaker is apt to look mean or diminutive if the pulpit is either on a very large scale or covered with splendid ornament, and if the interest of the sermon should flag, the mind is instantly tempted to wander. I have observed that in almost all cathedrals, when the pulpits are peculiarly magnificent, sermons are not often preached from them ; but rather, and especially for any important purpose, from some temporary erection in other parts of the building : and though this may often be done because the architect has consulted the effect upon the eye more than the convenience of the ear in the placing of his larger pulpit, I think it also proceeds in some measure from a natural dislike in the preacher to match himself with the magnificence of the rostrum, lest the sermon should not be thought worthy of the place. . . .

* Advancement of Learning.

But, in the second place, whatever ornaments we admit ought clearly to be of a chaste, grave, and noble kind ; and what furniture we employ, evidently more for the honouring of God's word than for the ease of the preacher. For there are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition, or a divine message. If we look upon it entirely as the first, and require our clergymen to finish it with their utmost care and learning, for our better delight, whether of ear or intellect, we shall necessarily be led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think that all is not well if the pulpit have not a golden fringe round it, and a goodly cushion in front of it, and if the sermon be not fairly written in a black book, to be smoothed upon the cushion in a majestic manner before beginning ; all this we shall duly come to expect ; but we shall at the same time consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen without restlessness for half an hour or three quarters, but which, when that duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds in happy confidence of being provided with another when it shall be necessary. But if once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death, whether we hear or refuse ; if we look upon him as set in charge over many souls in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them ; if we make some endeavour to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God after his flock have been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing up in their hearts, and to see what wheat has been scattered there snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other ; and at last, when breathless and weary with the week's labour, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing—he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master himself has stood and knocked yet none opened, and to call at the entrance of those dark streets where wisdom herself has stretched forth her hands and no man regarded ; thirty minutes to raise the dead in—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon that frippery of gay furniture about the place from which the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the dry bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation, perhaps against the utterer and listener alike, but assuredly against one of them—we shall not so easily bear with the silk and gold upon the seat of judgment, nor with ornament of oratory in the mouth of the messenger ; we shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest, and the place from which he speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst.” *

* John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, Vol ii. Ch. 1. § 12, 13, 14.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE most perfect science is but a well-ordered arrangement of thoughts and observations framed for practical utility ; or, as Dr. Chalmers says, "it is a record of observed phenomena." Science had birth, not in theoretical books, but in the anima and genius of competent experimentalists, which must necessarily direct to the safest and readiest way to practice. The science of preaching thus arose to view, furnishing valuable facilities to the gospel publisher ; for with the advantage of an arranged system, and any tolerable ability for communication, great superiority must be acquired over the desultory preacher.

The first preachers of the gospel did not follow the rules of art ; but in succeeding ages, as learning rose or declined, attention to the arrangement of the several parts of a discourse was encouraged or neglected. Yet as the declensions had longer periods than the revivals themselves, which were partial and slow in gaining strength, so no science suffered more interruptions in its progress towards perfection than that of preaching ; otherwise it would, ere this, have attained to such strength and beauty as wholly to supersede the necessity of new works to teach it. Many great and learned men have lived and died leaving the work of improvement where they found it ; while preachers of an inferior order have contented themselves with antiquated rules, and have been satisfied to perform their work as well as their predecessors—so fatal to improvement is the want of emulation.

It would be unjust to state that no attempt has been made to raise the standard of preaching. Bishop Wilkins wrote an elaborate treatise suited to his own times ; and he remarks that others had done the same. Valuable extracts from this work are to be found in Williams's Christian Preacher. The only work, however, that has survived the lapse of time, and preserved its reputation, is the Essay of Mons. Claude, a French Protestant divine, who flourished about a century and a half ago, in an age which might be called the Augustan age of Christian preaching, at least in France and Holland. Attention to pulpit composition was then greatly encouraged. Bossuet, Bourdalouë, and Massillon shone in

the Catholic church ; while Claude, Saurin, and Superville* rose to eminence among the Protestants. These men boldly seized upon the treasures of Grecian and Roman eloquence, and made them subservient to the Christian cause ; and to this may be traced the superiority which the French school obtained.

England, whose characteristic has often been to be the last in improvement, suffered this superiority to prevail. The *homiletical* style of preaching—a method calculated to inform the judgment, but by no means to affect the heart—was for a long time generally adopted. The *textual* style was subsequently introduced, and finally triumphed ; but still the method was dull, prolix, and wearisome.

Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon was at length introduced into this country ; and it is supposed that Dr. Blair, of Edinburgh, obtained his high reputation, which spread over both Scotland and England, by adopting the rules of that celebrated Essay. He understood the French language, and no doubt derived great advantage from Claude long before an English translation was printed.

We are indebted to Mr. R. Robinson, a Baptist minister of Cambridge, for the first English translation of that celebrated work. It appeared with a mass of heterogeneous notes, of which he says, in his preface, that they "might appear a *strange farrago* if the circumstances were not considered which gave birth to them." Some of these notes were learned and judicious ; but the greater part were of a cast by no means suited to the gravity and purity of a Christian minister ; which, added to the acrimony with which he assailed all national religious establishments, prevented the work from obtaining that general circulation which it would otherwise have deserved. Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, aware of the objections to Robinson's edition, published the Essay without his notes, and he has since republished it with great amendments. Desirous that the Claudian scheme of sermonizing might supersede all others, he has also published *twenty-two thick volumes of closely printed skeletons of sermons* to exemplify its principles, and to furnish assistance to the junior clergy on entering upon their respective charges. Such a work in its kind was never before attempted ; and it is not too much to suppose that the rapid increase of evangelical preachers in the establishment is in a great measure owing to this performance.

The author of the present work, though with very humble pretensions, thinks, with Mr. Simeon, that the rules of Claude are by no means perfect, and, indeed, under the circumstances perfection was not to be expected. Claude's Essay was not published in

* There is an excellent Translation, in one volume, selected from Superville, by Mr. Allen, of Hackney. It is to be regretted that the whole of his works are not translated.

his lifetime, but was found by his son among a great number of manuscripts, after his decease, and by him published, bearing evident marks of an unfinished work. It is certainly a sketch drawn by a masterly hand, in some parts finished, but in others furnishing a *mere outline*. Another disadvantage arises from the great number of abstract rules of sermonizing with which the Essay abounds, many of them having no illustration whatever which could answer the proposed end. It is true, at the same time, that this defect might be overcome by a vigorous intellect and great application.

The author certainly ought to apologize for saying Mons. Claude's work is "imperfect," a "mere outline." He feels the highest respect for this author; and, if his work be imperfect, the harassing life he passed among fierce Catholics, and the many demands that were made on his time and labours, form a sufficient excuse. One of the imperfections alluded to respects subdivisions. He says, "As for subdivisions, it is always necessary to make them; for they very much assist composition." In this short account is comprised the whole doctrine of subdivisions, as he has stated it. But is this enough for a novitiate in composition? Certainly not. Had he revised his work for the press, this important point would not have escaped his intelligent mind. For the supply of this defect, the author of the present work has had recourse to justly celebrated writers of the present and past ages; and to these he has added a few ideas of his own, which the reader will receive or reject as he thinks proper. He has also generally given the preference to sermons of English preachers, rather than those which Claude furnished.*

The design of this work is to assist those preachers who are destitute of better help in the preparation of *their own discourses*; to furnish them with the means of giving *an original cast to the divisions and discussion*—an object to which it is presumed the following pages are fully adequate; and thus to relieve them from the painful and mortifying necessity of adopting the outlines and skeletons of others, or of preaching printed discourses, which may be in the possession of some of their hearers, to the discredit of the preacher, thus convicted of delivering the sermons of another as his own.

This work, however, is not designed entirely to supersede the use of such valuable helps to composition as Simeon's *Skeletons*, *Horæ Homileticæ*, and *Appendix, Short Discourses, Village Sermons, &c.* If the author's opinion were of any value, he would not recommend their disuse; he would rather advise the young preacher to procure them, if he possess the means of doing so, as

* Those who wish to receive more information respecting Mons. Claude will find an account of his life prefixed to his "*Defence of the Reformation*," translated and published by the late Rev. John Townsend, in two volumes. The theological works published by Claude himself are of great value.

these works furnish a rich treasury of thought upon many important subjects, which, on occasion, may be so judiciously incorporated with his *own reflections*, and so arranged under the distinct heads of his *own formation*, as greatly to add to the value of his discourse; always remembering that *ideas only* are to be borrowed, not words. No congregation ought to be offended with a preacher for availing himself of such aids. But it is not easy to trace all the bad consequences which result from a preacher's entire adoption of *borrowed plans* without re-modelling them: his reputation as a preacher lies at the mercy of others; his talent for invention and love for study are left to dwindle, till they expire; he is limited in his choice of texts to the list of sermons he possesses; and he is not unfrequently exposed to the hazard of delivering sentiments which do not accord with his own.

To this improper practice, it is plain, too much encouragement has been given, and idleness has availed itself of the furniture provided by others; instead of endeavouring to stir up the energies of the mind, and to seek "the wisdom that cometh down from above," those unceasing supplies of the Spirit of grace which ever await the humble suppliant. Again, does not such profuse furniture, ready prepared for the pulpit, throw a reflection on the rising ministry, and on the education and tutorage received? Are the several matters which ought to be brought before plain people so abstruse that none but experienced ministers can find them out? Or, are we to fall into the common error of mankind—to be ever looking deep for that which after all is on the surface? We will be thankful to them for making plain "hard sentences, and dissolving doubts," and for giving valuable leading thoughts; but they might let plain things alone to speak for themselves: speak they will, we have no doubt, in sufficient plenitude.

But as to family uses, or village instruction, where no preacher can be procured, such assistances are indispensably necessary. And it is further admitted, that good has come out of evil, and, by the over-ruling providence of God, the gospel has been, and now is, preached in many hundreds of pulpits by the furniture so provided; and, by whatever means the people are so blessed, the author, with every well-wisher to Christ's kingdom, rejoices, "yea, and will rejoice." The author also rejoices that the enlightened sentiments of the venerable Simeon are now before the whole religious public, and that a permanent testimony is now recorded by him that the surest way of establishing public morals is by the diffusion of evangelical doctrines—as offering the most powerful motives to action, as Lord Herbert, the prince of modern deists, has candidly acknowledged.

The author also acknowledges that he is under great obligations to Mr. Simeon, for without his copious works it would have been extremely difficult to collect a full supply of examples of the

several kinds of sermonizing. Upon examination he has found, in this author, every possible variety, which is certainly not to be found in any other. Thus let truth and candour join hand in hand. Mr. Simeon's plan will meet the views of many, and some may prefer a different one, and may give a careful attention to the following work.

The author does not think it necessary, in this edition, to repeat a great number of apologies before made on account of his insufficiency for such an undertaking, as these would only add to the bulk of the work without contributing any thing to its value. Taking the work "for all in all," it will, he thinks, be impossible for any young preacher, in any state or degree of education, to study it—he does not mean merely to read it—without great enlargement of ideas relevant to his sacred work; his future labours will be more happily applied in proportion as the whole is studied, or at least such parts as shall appear best suited to particular talents and differently-constituted congregations; while the individual who has acquired the philosophy of all the important subjects of collegiate degrees, but who is not yet initiated into the discipline of the pulpit, may spare himself a great deal of labour, and will arrive sooner at fitness for the pulpit, by consulting a work of this nature—either Claude's original essay, or Simeon's with notes, or this work of larger compass—than he will by his own undirected toil; and the time so saved may be beneficially devoted to the glory of God in earlier and more active labours. If such a highly-advantaged person should think meanly of the earlier Lectures, yet if he addict himself to philosophy and learning after quitting the seat of the Muses and of Science, there are some subjects in these Lectures worthy of his elevated mind, and in the study of which the greatest characters in the church have gone before him. On this account, though such persons may not be convinced by the author's statements, yet he thinks it discreditable to the liberality of a learned man to depreciate initiatory works of this description; and, since such persons do usually give the tone to common opinion, it is highly detrimental to general improvement if those who want instructive assistance are told that such tuitive things are beneath their notice, or at best worth no more than cursory attention when time and leisure will allow of a perusal.

Those who have occasioned these remarks, and to whom the church and the public are highly indebted, will no doubt upon reflection join in recommending such preparatory works, which may possibly do much good by extending the means of public instruction and improving those means to their designed end. No other motive induced the author to undertake the work; and, as he said on a former occasion, "he has no vanity to gratify, no gain in view; and if his own feelings were consulted, he would

rather go off the stage of life unobserved and unheard of, than appear in the character of an author, if a sense of duty did not impel him to suppress such feelings."

It only remains to be stated, that this third edition has undergone a thorough revision, and every thing has been done which the author's maturest reflections and experience could accomplish to render the work worthy of its title as "THE PREACHER'S MANUAL," to the Such as it is, he now commends it with all affection attention of his brethren, and to the blessing of the great head of the church.

INTRODUCTION.

THE gospel is of a restorative or remedial character, its design being to remove defects which once had no place either in man's body or mind. Our Lord opened his ministry in this precise view. He was moved with compassion for the diseased bodies of men, but especially for the ruin of their minds; hence his holy teaching and his opening the eyes of the blind, with its spiritual signification. Jesus saw the mind all confusion, "waste and wild," "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." The mischiefs that were perpetrated in this state of darkness constitute the subject of history, and the foul blot of that record. The darkness that prevailed at the first creation (Gen. i. 2) was original, and light was to be created; but the darkness of men's minds was not original but incidental; for man was created in the image of Him who is eternal light. It is however an undoubted fact that the perfect intelligence with which man was originally endowed passed away with his innocence: his understanding became in a great degree darkened, and all the faculties of his mind enfeebled. In his present state, indeed, there is a kind of after-light remaining, like that which continues after sunset, and he is still blessed with the power of thought and reflection, which he can exercise upon various subjects; he is able to consider their nature, and ascertain their tendency to produce good or evil; he can trace consequences back to the causes which produced them, or compare one thing with another, or with some real or imaginary standard of excellency. This process of the mind, to which the moral sense lends its powerful aid, supplies in some measure the place of intuitive knowledge. To divine revelation he is, however, wholly indebted for just ideas of his present character, and for all his knowledge in relation to his future destiny. Guided by this unerring standard, his investigations are preserved within the boundaries of truth, and a wide range is presented for the exercise of his mental powers. Possessing these advantages he is able to enrich, improve, or correct his thoughts. Thus he becomes more and more rational, recovers something of his loss by the fall, acquires more extensively the pleasures of imagination, and, by a divine blessing, becomes increasingly fitted to enjoy intellectual and heavenly contemplations.

Assisted by the contrivance of art, he is, moreover, enabled to record his thoughts for future inspection, or to publish them for the benefit of others. This is a happy circumstance; for, as all do not possess equal degrees of information, the more intelligent

may thus convey many valuable ideas to their less favoured brethren. Thus man becomes extensively a greater blessing to man, by communicating that which brings them more on a level in the knowledge of the things of God and of virtue, thereby being instrumental in bringing many into a social, godly, and happy state, who were before lost to such enjoyments.

But it is the power of speech, with which man is blessed, that furnishes the most effective means of communicating instruction. By this he can make known his thoughts to his fellow-men instantaneously, without the tedious process of writing or making signs. And here the pleasures of society, of social intercourse and sweet enjoyment, begin; here we take sweet counsel together, by an immediate interchange of thought and sentiment. Thus also instruction may be imparted, not only with the greatest facility, but in the most interesting form. This is particularly the case with regard to religious instruction, in which oral communications possess a decided superiority over all other human means. Hence infinite wisdom has appointed the public proclamation of the gospel *viva voce* as the grand engine for evangelizing the world. Other means are undoubtedly employed. Early education, pious example, religious tracts, and especially the perusal of the written word, are, under the blessing of God, rendered valuable auxiliaries in the dissemination of truth; but it is the *preaching* of the cross which is more especially characterized as "the power of God unto salvation."

Here then the intelligent preacher stands confessedly distinguished as the most important character on earth: imbued with the spirit of that gospel which he is commissioned to declare, and replete with capacity for thought and ability for utterance, he pours upon the waiting ear the treasures of wisdom and knowledge drawn from the fountain of eternal truth, by Christ's own appointment; and what is so uttered, in the purity of the "truth as it is in Jesus," there is reason to trust will, by his Spirit, be made effectual for saving purposes. This, I hope, is a just view of the scheme and importance of public preaching.

Preaching then, it appears, becomes the unchangeable province of the Christian minister, but not his only duty, not even when combined with his pastoral office: as ever, so now especially, he is to be "ready to every good work" that presents itself. There were times, now happily gone by, when penal statutes imposed restraints upon the full range of ministerial exertions. The minister then concentrated his care upon his immediate congregation, like the mariner in stormy weather, who takes in his sails and just bears up to the wind. In this position they waited and prayed for better times. Answers to their prayers were long in coming, but they came at last; and we now enjoy the benefit of their fervent petitions, and of many excellent works which they have left on printed

record. But now the peculiar character of the age requires us to enlarge our solitudes, to spread our sails, and push our purposes more extensively. The times then had a tendency to contract the minds of God's servants ; but now expansion must ring in your ears. Now you must cherish a truly catholic spirit ; for, besides the love of God and your immediate church membership or parochial charge, you owe universal love to all mankind. Let your regard to your own religious society be only a part of your universal love. This affection will be cherished by considering the benevolent design of human redemption, the personal labours of Jesus to publish it, and the humiliation and sufferings to which he submitted for its accomplishment,—by reading the travels of St. Paul, and tracing his arduous and successful labours,—by perusing missionary documents,—and by your attendance at our public religious meetings. This spirit when acquired, will lead you in your public prayers to intercede very earnestly for all and each of our religious societies, now, happily, so numerous ; and this again will kindle a like spirit in the people among whom you labour.

The cause of foreign missions, now assuming an aspect so interesting, cannot but ensure a portion of your attention, while objects nearer home will not be lightly regarded. You will be led particularly to cherish a very affectionate feeling for poor Ireland, both in public and private, a great majority of whose inhabitants are under the dominion of an infatuated and infuriated priesthood. You will pray for your active brethren there, who are exposed to the chief force of this priestly fury ; nor will you forget the persecuted who dare to listen to the gospel. It is indeed pleasing to reflect that evangelical religion and the cause of education, both in Ireland and England, are making great progress, “though with much contention.” It is hoped that the papacy in the former country will not be able to counteract or impede such powerful efforts, and that her boasted majority of Ireland's population will, in a few years, be exchanged for a minority. The truth is great and must prevail.

The benevolent spirit now recommended will induce you to take a lively interest in all Sunday and other schools throughout the district you occupy. These are the nurseries of our churches. The plants being young and much exposed, require the tenderest care and protection.

The same spirit will also prompt you to use all your influence with your people to unite in every Christian undertaking. You must aim to infuse into their minds a public spirit, that they may be “ready to every good word and work,” and thus become your auxiliaries ; for by multiplying means you produce increased effects.

It is however impossible to state in detail all the objects to which you should direct your attention, for in every six months a new scheme of benevolence commences its course. While I am writing Christian Instruction Societies and City Missions rise to view, the

agents of which are employed in making domiciliary visits,—giving, or rather lending, tracts,—conversing with the ignorant and wretched poor, and endeavouring to lead them to the long-neglected house of God. The City Mission in fact promises to become the most powerful aid of the public ministry. The idea was started some time ago by Dr. Chalmers, then of Glasgow: and already the cause is proceeding in London and its vicinity, as well as in other places. Even before you will be able to read this Introduction, other plans may commence to engage the attention of Christians, and in which your exhortations will be very needful. It is worthy of remark that in the multitude of different designs the general effect is not weakened. God does not suffer one plan to destroy another,* but all are evidently under his divine favour, and receiving the seal of his approbation.

As the ministers of Christ, you are justly expected, not only to preach the gospel, but also to be leaders and patrons of benevolence in its universal sense. Is not this love “the fulfilling of the law?” the first of virtues? Does it not bring us into the nearest point of resemblance possible, in such weak and frail creatures as we are, to “HIM who is love?” This principle, therefore will carry you comfortably through all your labours, give the tone to all public services and co-operations with your beloved people, and shed a lustre over all your other qualifications for the Christian ministry.

Again, this universal love must be associated or blended with a **LARGE AND COMPREHENSIVE MIND** for your own good government. Not such a mind as directed Alexander to conquer the world, but a mind under the highest influence—I mean a *gracious mind*, a mind that is renewed in all its faculties (Eph. iv. 23; Col. iii. 10); for however great and excellent man’s powers once were, or however much of that greatness is left since the fall, we know that by nature they are all depraved, and not adapted for God’s work. It is then a gracious, a renewed mind, that we are contemplating—renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: this is termed a *creation*, or the renewal of our holiness lost in Adam. But still this is too general a term, as it belongs to all believers as such. The Christian ministry requires such a mind as that of Paul, the prince of preachers; we see every thing in him that was gracious, large, and comprehensive, yet correct in government, superior to difficulties or sufferings. Here is an adaptation of the mind to the work, formed upon fixed principles, and set upon great objects. It is true you are not called to such extraordinary services, nor are you so highly gifted; but a share of Paul’s spirit will fall upon you as the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha. If we

* There is no rule without an exception; in a few instances weaker societies do seem, in some degree, to suffer by such as are stronger and more highly patronized. What are called “Sick Societies,” for instance, are cramped very much in their exertions for want of better support.

are not called to foreign climes, let us extend our labours at home. We ought no longer to wait for unconverted sinners to come to our churches and chapels—we have waited too long; we should follow them into the fields, their places of resort; and, as to the indolent and the infirm, we should carry the gospel into their very houses, and thus compel as many as possible to come in, that God's house may be filled.

We see that the energies of the mind, even when unassisted by that influence which the gospel preacher is warranted to expect, are capable of wonderful exploits: the histories of our military and naval heroes afford numerous instances; and the perseverance of many travellers in exploring the very interior of barbarous countries is truly astonishing. The discoveries of a Newton show us what the human mind is capable of. The poet of Stratford-upon-Avon "exhausted worlds, and then imagined new." The conceptions of Homer and Milton transcend all ordinary bounds. The persevering application of men to obtain wealth has in many instances been most wonderful. How much more, then, will the mind expand and strengthen under *divine influence*, with such amazing objects to excite its diligence as eternal things present to it! But we must all confess that we have not yet attained to this excellence. "What do we more than others?" We are all guilty; we have not fulfilled the ministry which we have received as we ought. There are weapons sufficient in the gospel armoury; but we have not used them, and perhaps not even applied for them. The Holy Spirit is promised to strengthen us, and to give success to our warfare; but we have not properly sought his assistance. Motives abound on every hand, but we have not felt their influence. Examples have been left, but they have not been followed. The command of Christ stands upon record, but we have disregarded his authority. The promise of his presence has been vouchsafed to assist us, but we have not depended upon it. Souls perish for lack of knowledge, but we have no compassion upon them. We have consulted our ease, our secular interests; we have lived too much to ourselves; we have ourselves escaped the pit of destruction, but have been criminally inattentive to those who are daily sinking into it. O God! the residue of the Spirit is with Thee. O send out Thy light and Thy truth! let them lead us to live and act as men and Christians, that we may do all that we can to promote the salvation of men and the glory of the Saviour, who designed by his being lifted up to draw all men to himself! Still I am most ready to acknowledge that we have many happy exceptions, who fall not under any censure of this nature.

The usual routine of the ministerial office does not change with the age. The stated duties of a minister call for the exercise of great wisdom, a strong and piercing insight into human nature, through all its labyrinths, and all the varieties under which it appears. Every minister should be a discerner of the spirits of men, that he may bene-

ficially adapt his discourses so as to take a fast hold of every variety of character,—to show to each his own image,—to reprove, correct, or comfort, *pro re nata*: thus becoming, not only a preacher of the gospel, but also a casuistic divine. Persons so skilled have often so described the heart of the hearer, and spoken to him or her so effectually to the purpose, as to raise suspicion of previous secret communications. This is excellent. This province of the ministry will be well understood by reading Blackwell's *Methodus Evangelicæ*, and Baxter's *Saint's Rest*. Mr. Walker of Edinburgh has many searching, discriminating discourses, well worthy attention, particularly his sermon on 2 Cor. vi. 1. Owen on Ps. cxxx., John Howe's Sermon on Love to God, and Jameson's Sermons on the Heart, are also in this view highly valuable. Some ideas may be found in the following Lectures, under the index words "Casuistic divinity."

I may be allowed a few concluding sentences to this short address before we enter on the ensuing Lectures. I will not write of my anxieties, of my love, of my hopes and my fears for the rising ministry, of my prayers every day that the world may be benefited by more efficient servants than we are and have been, who are ready to leave active service, either as invalids or to give account of our stewardship in the unknown state, "from whose bourne no traveller returns." I shall be permitted to hope that thoughts or sentiments unseasonably elevated, or habits of indulgent ease, will not obstruct our junior ministers in the acquisitions necessary to make them successful preachers.

The general scheme of these Lectures is developed in the first nine of them. The several kinds of discourse are placed as nearly as possible in an ascendant scale—the easiest first, and most difficult last; the lowest is not to be despised, the highest not to be despaired of. The closest attention to the nature and quality of subdivisions will be well repaid, for the strength, beauty, and propriety of a discourse are seen here.

The Topics are auxiliaries to our nine kinds of discourses, and form a magazine of rich treasure, a mine which cannot be exhausted; and the classified examples of exordiums and perorations, selected from the highest names in our language, cannot fail to afford valuable instruction. After these we arrive at a Lecture on *Comment*, the study of which will, I trust, tend to promote strength and efficiency in pulpit discourses.

In the Appendix will be found three short treatises, which will well repay an attentive perusal—one on *Plain Language*, a second on the *Connection between Theological Study and Pulpit Eloquence*, and a third on *Extemporaneous Preaching*. It may not be improper to add, that my attention was directed to the *American* articles by very competent judges of their literary and theological value, and I cannot but hope that their publication in this country will be productive of salutary effects on the present and rising ministry.

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

ON THE CHOICE OF A TEXT, AND ITS GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

THE CHOICE OF TEXTS is a point of considerable importance. In making your selection, you should be careful to choose such as you fully understand ; and, in composing and preaching your sermon, to explain its *literal* meaning to the congregation. The *spiritual* application of a text should flow naturally from the literal interpretation ; for to affix a fanciful (not to say fantastical) meaning to a passage of God's word, under an idea of *spiritualizing* the text, is abominable. By such a method, errors have been, and still are, propagated ; and many congregations are kept in ignorance of the very first principles of the oracles of God. You ought to avoid the fashionable error of selecting a portion of scripture merely as a *motto*. Every passage chosen for a text ought to contain at least one distinct proposition, and that proposition should be the subject of the discourse. Nor should passages be selected from which no important matter, having a direct bearing on the spiritual and eternal interests of the people, can be drawn. A minister of no ordinary celebrity once preached from I Kings x. 22 : "Gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." An angel might have wept over the woeful prostitution of an office expressly instituted to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, and to build up the church of Christ in the faith and hope of the gospel.

In the choice of texts we see the importance of a *sound judgment*, to fix upon such as the wants of the people require. Indeed, we need Divine direction here. I have invariably succeeded best in preaching upon texts suggested to my mind in secret prayer ; but this has not been very frequently the case. Perhaps some of these arose out of the feelings of my own heart ; and such were likely to suit the feelings of others. Here I have never been deceived ; nor do I recollect that I ever put aside texts so suggested to me : they have always been appropriate, as might be expected.

The difficulty of choice increases with the years of a preacher's residence in one station. I need not say any thing to you on this point, as your own experience will teach you what to do. For myself, I may observe that I

never undertook to preach on a text till I saw clearly my way, nor till I saw clearly my duty, as to such text.

Texts should be neither too *short* nor too *long*. In the former case, extraneous and irrelevant matter must be introduced into the discourse; and, in the latter, much that is important must in general remain untouched. Some passages, however, though long, may be advantageously treated in a single discourse. Walker, of Edinburgh, in his sermon on Col. i. 16—19, discusses this comprehensive passage thus:—I. What Christ is in himself II. What he is to us, or the church. III. His qualifications for the discharge of what belongs to that station. Farquhar, in his twelfth and fifteenth Discourses, also furnishes schemes as comprehensive as they are appropriate.

I would recommend you to avoid, at first, those texts which almost necessarily lead to the discussion of the more difficult and abstruse parts of theology, and to confine yourself principally to those which treat on the original state of man,—the fall, and its consequences,—the total depravity of man, his guilt, corruption, helplessness, and ruin,—the redemption of man by Jesus Christ,—the plan by which that redemption was procured and is applied,—the glory of Christ's person, the riches of his grace—in short all he did and all he suffered, what he is now doing and what he will do at the end of time,—the personality and office of the Holy Spirit,—the nature of his work on the human heart, and its effects,—man's duty and his responsibility. The Psalms will always furnish passages descriptive of the experience of the saints; and the Epistles will direct to those distinguishing doctrines of the gospel which are the foundation of the sinner's hope.

Avoid, likewise, all words, phrases, or even allusions, of an indelicate nature. The language of scripture itself is not always to be quoted *literally*. The same meaning would occasionally have been expressed in other language had the translation been made in the present day; but whether refinement in language has been accompanied by a corresponding purity of mind is a question I am not competent to determine.

The time of the congregation is not [often] to be taken up with *critical* remarks. These may sometimes be necessary, but should always be introduced with great caution. Learned quotations are seldom required; and a young man who frequently introduces them is generally considered as more desirous of showing his extensive reading than of benefiting the people. Dr. Doddridge, in his Lectures, furnishes some valuable cautions on this subject, as well as on the choice of texts.

When called upon to preach in strange churches, 1. Do not choose *texts which appear odd*, the choice of which vanity may be supposed to dictate. 2. *Nor a text of censure*: this is assuming. 3. *Nor a text leading to curious and knotty questions*: then it would be said that you preached yourself. 4. Do not aim to eclipse the minister of the place by an *extraordinary display of talent*: this is unkind. But, 5thly, Choose a text of an *ordinary edifying nature*, connecting doctrine and practice together, still not a doctrine in respect of which there may be at that time much division among the people; this, I think, does not belong to a stranger. Deliver the discourse with urbanity and Christian feeling; you will then be welcome a second time.

IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A TEXT the first thing to be considered is, whether there be any thing which requires explanation. In particular, single words must be explained—

1. If they be of foreign derivation, and not sufficiently familiarized to plain people, as *unction*, *charity*, and many others.

2. When a word is used in scripture in a sense well understood two or three hundred years ago, but now obsolete, as *prevent*, Ps. lxxix. 8.*

3. When a word has several significations, and you mean to confine it to one.

4. When a term is compounded of two or more words in any unusual way, especially if in a manner peculiar to a foreign language.

5. When a word has become quite obsolete, as *leasing*, Ps. iv. 2.

6. But especially proper and appellative names which we find untranslated in our bibles.

7. Single words are often key-words to the sense of the text, as the word *so*, John iii. 16, for which see Index of Texts.

8. Doctrinal words, as salvation, justification, adoption, sanctification, &c. Such terms should be explained with *clearness*, that the most ignorant may understand,—with *brevity*, that it may not occupy the time which the discussion will require,—and *scripturally*, because the same terms are employed in a variety of senses. A good biblical dictionary will render considerable assistance in fixing the true meaning of a term.†

9. This method may also be adopted in preaching from such passages as Acts ii. 27, 28, when the terms, *soul*, *hell*, *life*, must be clearly defined, and their meaning fixed.

Scripture *phrases* frequently require explanation, sometimes on account of their reference to the customs of the Jews and other eastern nations, not generally understood among us; and, at other times, because of the proneness of the more illiterate to affix to them a false meaning, which leads to errors most destructive in their consequences.

I will subjoin a list of several, with their explanation. The number might be considerably increased, but these comprise some of the most frequent occurrence.

2 Cor. v. 17. *In Christ*—United to him by living faith.

Matt. xi. 28. *To come to Christ*—To believe in him as the appointed Saviour.

viii. 34. *To come after Christ*—To be his disciple—to follow his direction and example.

Rom. i. 17. *From faith to faith*—From one degree of faith to another.

viii. 13. *To live after the flesh*—To live according to the dictates of unrenewed nature.

Rom. viii. 1. *To live after the Spirit*—To yield to his teaching and sanctifying influences.

2 Cor. iii. 18. *From glory to glory*—From one spiritual excellence to another.

Ephes. iv. 22. *The old man*—Our sinful nature.

24. *The new man*—Our nature renewed in the image of God.

Rom. viii. 10. *Christ in you*—Christ ruling in the soul, by his Spirit.

xiv. 7. *To live to ourselves*—To be actuated by selfish principles.

Gal. vi. 17. *Crucified to the world*—Dead to its allurements.

World crucified to us—Lost its power or influence over us.

John xv. 5. *Abiding in Christ*—Continually exercising faith in him and love to him.

1 John iii. 14. *Abiding in death*—Destitute of the inward life of God.

John iii. 16. *To believe in Christ*—To rely on him for salvation.

Acts viii. 23. *To be in the gall of bitterness*—To be wholly under the dominion of sin.

21. *Part or lot*—Right of inheritance.

[* See the works of Dean Trench, especially *English Past and Present*.]

[† Those of a Theological character which may be safely recommended are Watson's, of the evangelical Arminian school, and Fairbairn's, of the moderately Calvinistic.]

- Acts xi. 23. *To cleave to the Lord*—To adhere to his doctrine and service.
- 1 Cor. v. 5. *The day of the Lord*—The final coming of Christ.
- Ps. xxvii. 4. *The beauty of the Lord*—The glorious manifestations of Jehovah's presence.
- exi. 10. *The fear of the Lord*—The filial affection of a gracious heart.
- lvii. 8. *Awake up, my glory*—My tongue, or my powers of praise.
- ix. 10. *The name of the Lord*—His perfections and attributes.
- Gal. v. 12. *To be cut off*—Excommunicated, accursed.
- Matt. xxiii. 13. *Outer darkness*—The uncheered gloom and hopeless anguish of hell.
- 1 Pet. ii. 9. *To be called out of darkness*—Out of a state of spiritual ignorance. It sometimes refers to pagan darkness—sometimes to the Jewish dispensation.
- Eph. iii. 17. *Christ dwelling in our hearts*—As a principle of life, to quicken; as a teacher, to instruct; as a guide, to direct; as a friend, to help; as a king, to rule.
- Rom. vii. 24. *The body of sin and death*—The corrupt, sinful nature of man.
- John vi. 54. *To eat Christ's flesh*—To derive spiritual nourishment from him by faith.
- Matt. vi. 33. *To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*—The state of grace under the gospel, and its accompanying privileges.
- Heb. vi. 18. *To flee for refuge*—To flee to Christ, from pursuing wrath, in allusion to the cities of refuge under the law.
- 2 Cor. v. 12. *Christ made sin for us*—An offering for sin.
Made the righteousness of God in him—Freely justified, on believing, in virtue of what Christ has done and suffered.
- 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*—Put to death in his humanity, but quickened by his divinity.
- 1 Thess. v. 19. *Quench not the Spirit*—Act not in opposition to his enlightening, sanctifying, and quickening influences.
- Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the Spirit*—by indulging desires, affections, &c., contrary to his purity.
- Acts vii. 51. *Resisting the Holy Ghost*—Not yielding to the evidences of divine authority in the scriptures; not receiving the truth at the hands of God's ministers.
- Matt. xii. 31, 32. *Sin against the Holy Ghost*—Ascribing to the agency of Satan those miracles which Christ wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost.*
- xvi. 24. *To deny ourselves*—To forego those pursuits and indulgences which are opposed to the spirit of Christianity, and militate against our spiritual prosperity.
- Matt. xvi. 24. *Taking up the cross, &c.*—Patiently submitting to the reproach consequent upon our profession of attachment to Christ and his cause.†

Whenever you meet with such passages as these, you must not pass them lightly, for perhaps the discourse will turn very much upon them. Again: if the force of a passage depends on the form of expression, or any word in it, great care must be taken. But on this point I refer you to the early part of the Fifteenth Topic, in the ensuing pages. Almost any commentator will throw light enough on these subjects.

The following *general observations on the management of a text*, should be deeply impressed on the student's mind and memory. M. Claude very judiciously observes—

“I. A sermon should *clearly* and purely *explain a text*, make the sense easy to be comprehended, and place things before the people's eyes so

* The Jews committed this sin against the evidence of *sense*: it does not appear to be possible for any man to commit it now in that precise form; yet enmity and malice against the truth, in those who once acknowledged and professed it, evince a degree of criminality equal to that of the Pharisees.

† The student should carefully study each of these for himself. Some of the explanations in the text are far from being correct.]

that they may be understood without difficulty. This rule condemns embarrassment and *obscurity*, the most disagreeable things in the world in a gospel pulpit. It ought to be remembered that the greatest parts of the hearers are simple people, whose profit, however, must be aimed at in preaching; but it is impossible to edify them unless you be very clear.* As to learned hearers, it is certain that they will always prefer a clear before an obscure sermon; for, first, they will consider the simple, nor will their benevolence be content if the illiterate be not edified; and, next, they will be loth to be driven to the necessity of giving too great an attention, which they cannot avoid if the preacher be obscure. The minds of men, whether learned or ignorant, generally avoid pain; and the learned have fatigue enough in the study, without increasing it at church.†

“II. A sermon must give the *entire sense* of the *whole* text, in order to which it must be considered in every view. This rule condemns *dry* and *barren explications*, wherein the preacher discovers neither study nor invention, and leaves unsaid a great number of beautiful things with which his text would have furnished him. Preachments of this kind are extremely disgusting—the mind is neither elevated nor informed, nor is the heart at all moved. In matters of religion and piety, not to edify much is to destroy much; and a sermon *cold* and *poor* will do more mischief in an hour than many rich sermons can do good. I do not mean that a preacher should always put forth his utmost efforts, or that he should always preach alike well; there are extraordinary occasions for which all his vigour must be reserved. But I mean that, in ordinary and usual sermons, a kind of plentitude should satisfy and content the hearers. The preacher must not always labour to carry the people beyond themselves, nor to ravish them into ecstasies; but he must always satisfy them, and maintain in them an esteem and an eagerness for practical piety.

“III. The preacher must be *wise, sober, chaste*. I say *wise*, in opposition to those impertinent people who utter jests, comical comparisons, quirks, and extravagances; and such are a great part of the preachers of the Church of Rome. I say *sober*, in opposition to those rash spirits who would penetrate all, and curiously dive into mysteries beyond the bounds of modesty. Such are those who make no scruple of delivering in the pulpit all the speculations of the schools on the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, the eternal reprobation of mankind; such as treat of questions beyond our knowledge—viz., What would have been if Adam had abode in innocence; what is the state of souls after death; or what the resurrection and our state of eternal glory in paradise. Such are those who fill their sermons with the different interpretations of a term, or the different opinions of interpreters on any passage of scripture; who load their hearers with tedious recitals of ancient history, or an account of the divers heresies which have troubled the church upon any matter: all these are contrary to the sobriety of which we speak, and which is one of the most excellent pulpit virtues. I say, further, *chaste*,

* The use of plain Saxon-English words will greatly contribute to this. See the Essay on Plain Language at the end of this work.

† Bishop Burnet says:—“A preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of the *most unlearned man in the whole parish*, and must therefore put such parts of his discourses as he would have all understand in so plain a form of words that it may not be beyond the *meanest* of them. This he will certainly study to do if his desire be to edify them, rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and high-spoken man.”—*Pastoral Care*, ch. ix.

in opposition to those bold and impudent geniuses who are not ashamed of saying many things which produce unclean ideas in the mind. A preacher cannot be called chaste who, speaking of the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin's womb, by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the intervention of man, is not careful of saying anything that may shock the modesty of some, and give occasion of discourse to the profanity of others. There are I know not how many subjects of this kind: as when the eternal *generation* of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is spoken of; when the term *regeneration* is explained, which scripture uses to express our conversion; or when we treat of that *seed* of God of which, according to St. John, we are born; or when we enforce the *duties* of husbands to wives, or of wives to husbands; or when we speak of the *love* of Jesus Christ to his church, under the notion of a *conjugal* relation; or when eternal felicity is spoken of under the image of a *banquet* or of a *marriage-feast*. On all such subjects chastity should weigh the expressions, and make a judicious choice, in order to keep the hearer's mind at the greatest distance from all sorts of carnal and terrestrial ideas. The likeliest way of succeeding in these cases is to beware of pressing metaphorical terms too far, to adhere to general considerations, and, if possible, to explain the metaphorical terms in few words, and afterwards to cleave entirely to the thing itself.

“IV. A preacher must be *simple* and *grave*. *Simple*—speaking things full of good natural sense, without metaphysical speculations; for none are more impertinent than those who deliver in the pulpit abstract speculations, definitions in form, and scholastic questions, which they pretend to derive from their texts; as, on the manner of the existence of angels, the means whereby they communicate their ideas to each other, the manner in which ideas eternally subsist in the divine understanding, with many more of the same class, all certainly opposite to simplicity. To simple I add *grave*, because all sorts of mean thoughts and expressions, all sorts of vulgar and proverbial sayings, ought to be avoided. The pulpit is the seat of good natural sense, and the good sense of good men. On the one hand, then, you are not to philosophize too much, and refine your subject out of sight; nor, on the other, to abase yourself to the language and thoughts of the dregs of the people.

“V. The understanding must be informed, but in a manner, however, which *affects the heart*, either to comfort the hearers, or to excite them to acts of piety, repentance, or holiness. There are two ways of doing this: one formal, in turning the subject to practical uses, and so applying it to the hearers; the other in the simple choice of the things spoken; for if they be good, solid, evangelical, and edifying of themselves, though no application should be formally made, the auditors would make it themselves, because subjects of this kind are of such a nature that they can scarcely enter the understanding without penetrating the heart. I do not blame the method of some preachers, who when they have opened some point of doctrine, or made some important observation, immediately turn it into a brief moral application to the hearers: this Mr. Daillé frequently did; yet I think it should not be made a constant practice, because, 1st, what the hearer is used to he will be prepared for, and so it will lose its effect; and, 2dly, because you would thereby interrupt your explication, and, consequently, also, the attention of the hearer, which is a great inconvenience. Nevertheless, when it is done but seldom, and seasonably, great advantage may be reaped.

"But there is another way of turning doctrines to practical uses which in my opinion is far more excellent, authoritative, grand, and effectual; that is, by treating the doctrine contained in the text in a way of *perpetual application*. This method produces excellent effects, for it pleases, instructs, and affects all together. But neither must this be made habitual, for it would fatigue the hearer, nothing being more delicate, nor sooner discouraged, than the human mind. There are fast-days, Lord's-supper-days, and many such seasonable times for this method. This way, as I have said, is full of admirable fruits; but it must be well executed, with power and address, with choice of thoughts and expressions, otherwise the preacher will make himself ridiculous, and provoke the people to say,

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus.

"VI. One of the most important precepts for the discussion of a text, and the composition of a sermon, is, above all things, to avoid excess: *Ne quid nimis*.

"1. There must not be too much *genius*—I mean, not too many brilliant, sparkling, and striking things; for they would produce very bad effects. The auditor will never fail to say: The man preaches himself, aims to display his genius, and is not animated by the Spirit of God, but by that of the world. Besides the hearer would be overcharged. The mind of man has its bounds and measures; and as the eye is dazzled with too strong a light, so is the mind offended with the glare of too great an assemblage of beauties. Furthermore it would destroy the principal end of preaching, which is to sanctify the conscience; for, when the mind is overloaded with too many agreeable ideas, it has not leisure to reflect on the objects, and without reflection the heart is unaffected. Moreover, ideas which divert the mind are not very proper to move the conscience; they flatter the imagination, and that is all. Such a preacher will oblige people to say of him, "He has genius, a lively and fruitful imagination; but he is not solid." In fine, it is not possible for a man who piques himself on filling his sermons with vivacities of imagination to maintain the spirit all along; he will therefore become a tiresome tautologist: nor is it hard in such sermons to discover many false brilliances, as we see daily.

"2. A sermon must not be *overcharged with doctrine*, because the hearers' memories cannot retain it all, and by aiming to keep all they will lose all; and because you will be obliged either to be excessively tedious, or to propose the doctrine in a dry, barren, scholastic manner, which will deprive it of all its beauty and efficacy. A sermon should instruct, please, and affect; that is, it should always do these as much as possible. As the doctrinal part, which is instructive, should always be proposed in an agreeable and *affecting* manner, so the agreeable parts should be proposed in an *instructive* manner; and even in the conclusion, which is designed wholly to affect, agreeableness must not be neglected, nor, altogether, instruction. Take care, then, not to charge your sermon with too much matter.

"3. Care must also be taken *never to strain any particular part*, either in attempting to exhaust it or to penetrate too far into it. If you aim at exhausting a subject, you will be obliged to heap up a number of common things without choice or discernment; if at penetrating, you cannot avoid falling into many curious questions and unedifying subtleties; and frequently, in attempting it, you will distil the subject till it evaporates.

"4. *Figures must not be overstrained.* This is done by stretching metaphor into allegory, or by carrying a parallel too far. A metaphor is changed into an allegory when a number of things are heaped up which agree to the subject, in keeping close to the metaphor. As in explaining this text, *God is a sun and a shield*, it would be stretching the metaphor into an allegory to make a great collection of what God is in himself, what to us, what he does in the understanding and conscience of the believer, what he operates on the wicked, what his absence causes, and all these under terms which had a perpetual relation to the *sun*. Allegories may be sometimes used very agreeably; but they must not be strained, that is, all that *can* be said on them must not be said. A parallel is run too far when a great number of conformities between the figure and the thing represented by the figure are heaped together. This is almost the perpetual vice of mean and low preachers; for when they catch a figurative word, or a metaphor—as when God's word is called a *fire*, or a *sword*; or the church a *house*, or a *dove*; or Jesus Christ a *light*, a *sun*, a *vine*, or a *door*; they never fail making a long detail of conformities between the figures and the subjects themselves, and frequently say ridiculous things. This vice must be avoided, and you must be content to explain the metaphor in a few words, and to mark the principal agreements, in order afterwards to cleave to the thing itself.

"5. *Reasoning must not be carried too far.* This may be done many ways: as by long trains of reasons, composed of a number of propositions chained together, or of principles and consequences—which way of reasoning is embarrassing and painful to the auditory; or by making many branches of reasons, and establishing them one after another, which is tiresome and fatiguing to the mind. The mind of man loves to be conducted in a more smooth and easy way; all must not be proved at once; but supposing principles which are true and plain, and which you, when it is necessary, are capable of proving and supporting, you must be content with using them to prove what you have in hand. Yet I do not mean that, in reasoning, arguments should be so short and dry, and proposed in so brief a manner, as to divest the truth of half its force, as many authors leave them. I only mean that a due medium should be preserved; that is, that without fatiguing the mind and attention of the hearer, reasons should be placed in just as much force and clearness as are necessary to produce the effect.

"Reasoning may also be overstrained by heaping great numbers of proofs on the same subject. Numerous proofs are intolerable, except in a principal matter, which is likely to be much questioned or controverted by the hearers. In such a case, you would be obliged to treat the subject fully and *ex professo*; otherwise the hearers would consider your attempt to prove the matter as a useless digression. But when you are obliged to treat a subject fully, when that subject is very important, when it is doubted and controverted, then a great number of proofs are proper. In such a case, you must propose to convince and bear down the opponent's judgment, by making truth triumph in many different manners. In such a case, many proofs associated together to produce one effect are like many rays of light, which naturally strengthen each other, and which altogether form a body of brightness which is irresistible.

"6. You must, as much as possible, abstain from *all sorts of observations foreign from theology*. In this class I place,

"(1.) *Grammatical observations* of every kind, which, not being within the people's knowledge, can only weary and disgust them. They may, nevertheless, be used when they furnish an agreeable sense of the word, or open some important observation on the subject itself, provided it be done very seldom and very pertinently.

"(2.) *Critical observations* about different readings, different punctuations, &c., must be avoided. Make all the use you can of critical knowledge yourself; but spare the people the account, for it must needs be very disagreeable to them. I add,

"(3.) *Avoid philosophical and historical observations*, and all such as belong to *rhetoric*; or, if you do use them, do not insist on them, and choose only those which either give some light to the text or heighten its pathos and beauty: all others must be rejected.

"Lastly, I say the same of passages from *profane authors*, or *rabbis*, or *fathers*, with which many think they enrich their sermons. This farrago is only a vain ostentation of learning, and, very often, those who fill their sermons with such quotations know them only by the relation of others. However, I would not blame a man who should use them discreetly. A quotation not common, and properly made, has a very good effect."

I shall close this lecture with a few words on the management of a text in reference to its *connexion*. The connexion is the relation of your text to the foregoing or following verses. To find this, consider the scope of the discourse, and consult commentators; particularly exercise your own good sense, for commentators frequently trifle, and give forced and far-fetched connexions, all which ought to be avoided, for they are not natural, and sometimes good sense will discover the scope and design of a passage far better than this class of writers.

There are texts the connexions of which, I own, it will be sometimes difficult to perceive. In such a case, endeavour to discover them by frequent and intense meditation, or take that which commentators furnish; and, among many which they give, choose that which appears most natural. If you can find none that appears of any importance in relation to the text, the best way will be to let the context alone. In many Psalms, and in the Book of Proverbs, there really is no connexion whatever. I may add that the connexion is a part which must in general be very little insisted on, because the hearers almost always pass it over, and receive but little instruction from it.*

When the coherence will furnish any agreeable considerations for the illustration of the text, they must be put in the discussion; and this will very often happen. A very popular preacher, in the days of his strength, used frequently to take such a text as had in its surrounding verses a supply of particulars for the illustration of the text itself. This method gives variety, and is both agreeable and edifying. I have occasionally adopted it with success. Sometimes the context will supply suitable materials for an introduction. Blair furnishes some beautiful examples of exordiums in which the context is judiciously thrown into the form of a continuous narrative.

Mr. Simeon says: "There is, however, one point, in relation to the

[* It is all the more useful, therefore, for the preacher carefully to study it, and judiciously to present the meaning of the text as thus discovered.]

connexion, to which very especial attention should be paid, and it is this : the text should always be *taken according to the precise sense which it bears in connexion with the context, and be always treated in that precise view*. For, in addition to this being far more satisfactory to the audience, it will give an inexhaustible variety to the subjects, and infuse into every one of them a force and a spirit which nothing else could impart."

LECTURE II.

GENERAL ELEMENTS OF A DISCOURSE.

THE several parts of which a sermon should be composed require some statement. In a well-constructed discourse, five parts are usually reckoned—viz., the *exordium*, or introduction,—the *connexion*, which is the relation the text bears to the preceding and following verses,—the *division*, or the parts into which the discourse is distributed,—the *discussion*, or the matter introduced to illustrate and establish the subject of the text,—and the *peroration*, or application of the whole. As the connexion of the passage is generally obvious, and the division is merely technical, there are, generally speaking, but *three* principal parts to an expository discourse—the exordium, discussion, and application, though the middle part of these—the discussion—may embrace a great many subdivisions, or minor parts.

The design of the *exordium* is to introduce the subject to the minds of the auditory : it should insensibly conduct them to the points to be discussed, fix their attention, and interest their feelings. For this purpose it should be short, pertinent, and just ; suitable to the text, and to the character of the auditory. The context, as we have seen, will frequently supply an introduction well calculated to fix the attention by interesting the heart. An historical fact taken from scripture, or an interesting anecdote, may be occasionally employed. A recent occurrence which has excited the public attention may, but with great caution, be introduced. The subject of discourse is often made to supply the introduction ; but no topic should be employed for this purpose which would, if introduced into the discourse itself, confirm or illustrate any of its propositions. The Sermons of Jay, Walker, Lavington, and Robinson, furnish instances of introduction in all the forms I have specified. In some cases, the exordium may be entirely omitted.

Discussion, or the substance of the discourse, next claims the attention. It is called the *discussion*, from the Latin *discutio*, to *examine* or *search out* a thing. This very fitly illustrates the design of preaching. Truth sometimes lies deep, and cannot be obtained by superficial investigation. The word sometimes signifies to *debate* ; and this definition also illustrates the design of preaching. The preacher of the gospel has to combat strong prejudices, deep-rooted errors, and sophistical but destructive heresies ; to employ argument, and use entreaties, that those who hear him may come to the knowledge of the truth. Discussion may be conducted by *explication*,

observation, proposition, or perpetual application. The *application*, or *peroration*, recapitulates the strongest arguments, and appeals to the passions of the audience.

For the convenience of discussion, a sermon or oration is commonly divided into parts. Some ideas, which agree among themselves, have a certain place assigned them; other ideas, suggested by the text, range next to them in due order: and perhaps a third class also claims a place in the discussion. These several parts are not to be considered as ranged against each other, but are thus placed in order to give mutual assistance, and to combine their energy in producing some one principal effect. Like the cavalry, the artillery, and the infantry of an army, they have but one object in view, though different in operation. I hope the gravest among our fathers will not object to this allusion, as both the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostle Paul refer to military affairs in illustrating to us the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, Luke xiv. 31; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; and Eph. vi. 11—17.

There are certain technical signs employed to distinguish the several parts of a discourse. The first class consists of the *principal divisions*, marked in Roman letters, thus:—I. II. III. IV., &c. Next, the *subdivisions of the first class*, in figures, 1, 2, 3, &c. Under these, *subdivisions of the second class*, marked with a curve on the right, as 1), 2), 3), &c. Then, *subdivisions of the third class*, marked with two curves, as (1), (2), (3), &c., and under these, *subdivisions of the fourth class*, in crotchets, thus [1], [2], [3]. As—

I. Principal division.

1. Subdivision of first class.

1.) ————— of second class.

(1.) ————— of third class.

[1.] ————— of fourth class.

The use of these marks of distinction may be illustrated by giving the plan of a discourse on the *diversities of ministerial gifts*, with the principal divisions, and several subdivisions under each, marked distinctly.

1 Cor. xii. 4. "Now there are diversities of gifts," &c.

I. EXEMPLIFY THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT.

1. In preaching.

- 1.) Some excel in beauty of design.
- 2.) Some excel in neatness and perspicuity.
- 3.) Some have peculiar depth and profundity of judgment.
- 4.) Some excel in a clear and happy illustration of the several parts of a discourse.
- 5.) Some in compressing into a small compass much important matter.
- 6.) Some in a strong, nervous, and forcible communication of truth.
- 7.) Some in a lively animated delivery.
- 8.) Some in a gentle insinuating delivery.
- 9.) Some in rendering particular parts of a discourse striking, and introducing new ideas.
- 10.) Some in a close application of truth to the conscience and the heart.
- 11.) Some excel in treating one class of subjects, and some another. For instance:—
 - (1.) In treating doctrinal subjects—
 - [1.] As Bates on the Harmony of the Divine Attributes.
 - [2.] Polhill on Faith.
 - (2.) In describing Christian experience—as Owen on Indwelling Sin.
 - (3.) Some in unmasking Satan's devices, as Brooks.
 - (4.) Some more general, as Howe.

- (5.) Some in the precepts of Christianity, as Evans.
- (6.) Some on solemn subjects, as Baxter, Alleine.
- (7.) Some in promises and invitations, as Flavel.
- 12.) Others excel in brilliancy of thought, as Du Bosque.
- 13.) Some in beauty of language, as Saurin.
- (1.) Some in simple beauty, as Bates.
- (2.) Others are more ornamental, as Hervey.

2. *In prayer.*

- 1.) Some have great fertility of invention.
- 2.) Some unite fulness and conciseness.
- 3.) Some excel in peculiar propriety of matter adapted to peculiar occasions.
- 4.) Some have a wonderful variety.
- 5.) Some excel in fervour and affection, and draw every heart after them.
- 6.) Some have a peculiar unction.
- 7.) Some have great skill in making allusions to particular cases which are presented to them.
- 8.) And some employ the language of scripture with happy appropriateness in their public devotions.

II. DERIVE SOME LESSONS OF INSTRUCTION FROM THE SUBJECT.

- 1. Make it your business to contemplate the diversity of gifts with the most attentive eye.
- 2. Endeavour to know the particular gift which God has bestowed upon you, and cultivate it with sedulous attention.
- 3. Endeavour to acquire such a measure of all gifts that you may not offend by an inexcusable want of any of them.
- 4. Follow that mode which is suited to your talents.
- 5. Beware of attempting the higher parts of eloquence if you do not possess a genius for them.
- 6. Humility, zeal, affection, and prudence, will go far towards the attainment of those gifts which are most necessary to a proper discharge of ministerial duties.
- 7. A minister of inferior talents who labours to improve them by study, exercise, and prayer, will far surpass one of much superior gifts, who allows them to languish for want of culture.
- 8. Perhaps there is not a man who knows the extent of his gifts, nor to what extent they might have been cultivated by diligent application and suitable methods of improvement, nor to what eminence in usefulness he might have attained ; while sloth and misdirected application are the ruin of many.

You may perhaps be of opinion that I have attached more importance to the mechanical arrangement of a discourse than it really merits, and that in the foregoing example I have needlessly multiplied the divisions under the general heads. I admit that the divisions in that example are more numerous than will be required in ordinary cases. It should, however, be observed, that though such a method will materially assist in the composition of a sermon, it is wholly unnecessary to mention the minor divisions in preaching ; and, if a discourse contain a considerable number of divisions and subdivisions, care should be taken to fill up the respective parts with suitable matter, or it will be, indeed, a mere *skeleton*—bones strung together, “very many, and very dry.”

I must apprise you that I am about to pass over a great many pages of Claude, but not, I hope, without adequate reasons for the omission ; for, first, the pages omitted, treating of the manner of discussing different kinds of texts, are strictly and learnedly *critical*, though illustrated greatly by Mr. Simeon ; and I think such nice points may be waived for the present. And, secondly, I propose to give ample extracts of examples in all kinds ;

and I think such examples may, in a great degree, supersede all dry rules whatever, though acknowledged to be good. But, with Mr. Simeon's permission, I will present you with a few rules for composition which appear to me to embrace the very pith or marrow of the subject.

The nature of texts is extremely various, and many of them are very difficult to divide, except in a common-place, hackneyed way. Some are doctrinal, historical, prophetic, or typical; some contain a promise, others a threatening; some a wish, others a motive to action; some a parable; some a reason; some a comparison of two things together; some a vision; some a thanksgiving; some a description of the wrath or majesty of God, of the sun, or some other created object; some a commendation of the law, or of a person; others a prayer or meditation, a pathetic exclamation of anger, sorrow, admiration, imprecation, repentance, confession of faith, and so on. They must therefore be examined upon such points, carefully distinguishing all their characters, that you may see what course ought to be pursued. However,

"1. Take for your subject that which you believe to be the mind of God in the passage before you.

"Be careful to understand the passage thoroughly, and regard nothing but the mind of God in it.

"2. Mark *the character* of the passage," as intimated above.

"It may be more simple (as a declaration, a precept, a promise, a threatening, an invitation, an appeal,) or more complex (as a cause and effect, a principle and a consequence, an action and a motive to that action); and whatever be the *character of the text*, especially if it be clearly marked, *let that direct you in the arrangement of your discourse upon it.*

"For instance: 1 John iv. 18: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.'

"This passage should not be treated in a common-place way of showing, 1. What this love is; 2. What is the fear which it casts out; and, 3. How it casts out this fear. The passage is intended to show *the influence* of the love of God upon the soul, and to set it forth as *a test* of our attainments in true piety; and therefore the scope and intent of it should be seized as the ground-work of the division. Thus—Consider the love of God: 1. Its influence as a principle (casting out all slavish fear); and, 2. Its importance as a test (enabling us, by means of its influence in this respect, to estimate the precise measure of our attainments).*

"3. Mark *the spirit* of the passage.

"It may be tender and compassionate, or indignant, or menacing; but, whatever it be, let that be *the spirit of your discourse*. To be tender on an indignant passage, or indignant on one that is tender, would destroy half the force and beauty of the discourse. The soul should be filled with the subject, and breathe out the very spirit of it before the people. As God's ambassadors we should speak all that he speaks, and *as he speaks it*. God himself should be heard in us and through us.

"The true *meaning* of the text should be *the warp* which pervades the whole piece; and the *words* should be *the woof* that is to be interwoven, so as to form one connected and continued whole.

* See Simeon's Works, on 1 John iv. 18.

"The spirit of the words should pervade the discourse upon them.* Whatever peculiarity there be either in the matter or manner of the text, that should be transfused into the discourse, and bear the same measure of prominence in the sermon as it bears in the text itself.

"Take, for instance, Ps. cxlvii. 11 : 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.' You would give *the sense* of the text if you were to set forth, 1st. The characters described ; and 2ndly. God's favour towards them ; but if you were to show from the text, 1st. *How low God descends for the objects of his favour*, and, 2ndly. *How high he soars in his regards towards them*,† you would mark, and every one of your audience would feel, the *spirit* of them. If the reader consult the discourse on John i. 45,‡ he will find that the spirit of the text, that is, *the joy expressed in it*, serves as a foundation for one half of the discourse. So, also, if he will consult the discourse on Jer. v. 23—24,§ he will find that the *spirit* of that text gives the entire tone to the subject. The common way of treating it would be to consider, 1st. The mercies which God has vouchsafed to us ; 2ndly. The effect which they ought to produce upon us. But with such a division of the subject the *vituperative spirit* of it would be comparatively lost. The words of the prophet reprove the Jews,

"I. For the contempt of God's authority.

"II. For their insensibility to his love."

Matthew Henry, in his invaluable exposition, furnishes numerous specimens, felicitously embodying the spirit of the text in the very terms of his divisions. I shall here quote two, which will sufficiently illustrate the rule. The first is on Ps. xxiv. 5—6, "He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob !" On this Mr. Henry observes,

I. How highly the psalmist magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him.

II. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours.

The other example I will give more at length ; it is on Isa. xlviii. 1, 2 : "Hear you this, O house of Jacob ! who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth out of the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel ; the LORD of hosts is his name." Mr. Henry observes, in regard to the people of Israel—

* Mr. Simeon appears, by his idea of gaining the *very spirit* of his text, to resemble Robert Hall, who "was never pleased with any scheme of a sermon in which he could not at the outset say exactly what he meant to do with it." "He could do nothing with a text, or subject, till it resolved and shaped itself into a topic of which he could see the form and outline." Surely he could not mean the mechanical division of a text as his form and outline ; no, he meant something similar to what Mr. Simeon designates the *spirit* of a text ; and this idea can never be too highly valued nor too closely followed.

† Vide Appendix to Hor. Homil., Vol. II., p. 445, or Works, new ed., *in loco*.

‡ Ibid., Vol. IV., p. 217, or Works, *in loco*.

§ Ibid., Vol. III., p. 236, or Works, *in loco*.

I. *How high their profession of religion soared.*—What a fair show they made in the flesh, and how far they went towards heaven : what a good livery they wore, and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart. 1. They were “the house of Jacob ;” they had a place and a name in the visible church. “Jacob have I loved.” Jacob is God’s chosen ; and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. 2. They were “called by the name of Israel ;” an honourable name ; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law and the promises. *Israel* signifies a *prince with God* ; and they prided themselves in being of that princely race. 3. “They came forth out of the waters of Judah,” and thence were called *Jeus* ; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. 4. They “swore by the name of the LORD,” and thereby owned him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous judge of all. They *swore to the name of the Lord* (so it may be read) ; they took an oath of allegiance to him as their king, and joined themselves to him in covenant. 5. They “made mention of the God of Israel” in their prayers and praises ; they often spoke of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him. 6. They “called themselves of the holy city ;” and when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour, and jealousy for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many, who are themselves unholy, are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city. 7. They “stayed themselves upon the God of Israel,” and boasted of his promises and his covenant with them ; they “leaned on the LORD,” Mic. iii. 11. And, if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, “The LORD of hosts is his name,” the Lord of all ; happy are we, therefore, and very great, who have relation to him.

II. *How low their profession of religion sunk notwithstanding all this.*—It was all in vain ; for it was all a jest ; it was “not in truth and righteousness.” Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note—All our religious professions avail nothing any further than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them, we do but “Take the name of the Lord our God in vain.”

If the foregoing hints be thoroughly understood, and duly attended to, the composition of a sermon on passages which are supposed to be very difficult to manage with effect will become extremely easy. And I cannot render the student a greater service than by entreating him to fix these short rules deeply in his mind, and, when studying for the pulpit, carefully to seize the *sense*, the *character*, and the *spirit* of his text.

Above all things, take care of putting anything in the first part which supposes an understanding of the second, or which obliges you to treat of the second to make the first understood, by disengaging one idea from the other as well as you can.

ON SUBDIVISIONS.

The management of *subdivisions* is not less important than that of the *principal* ones ; and it is evident that a clear and sound understanding, united with a fertile invention, is here absolutely necessary. The principal divisions are generally in the text itself, and require merely a logical arrangement ; but texts do not always furnish subdivisions : the imagination must suggest them, and the judgment must determine their suitableness. Rules will therefore here be less available, yet they are not altogether useless. Subdivisions are to be considered either as a specification of the parts contained in the division itself, or an enumeration of such particulars as are necessary to make the division answer the end designed by it. The following are a few of the general characters under which they fall :—1. The *minute parts of the text*, arising out of it, as the smaller boughs of a tree proceed from the principal branches. 2. *Illustrative ideas*, serving to make the subject more clear and familiar. 3. *Reasons and arguments* to explain and confirm a proposition. 4. Subdivisions may be formed of *negatives*.

5. The several *circumstances* of the text, and sometimes those of the context. Such circumstances will frequently suggest very appropriate exordiums, but they may occasionally be employed as subdivisions with much advantage.

6. We may admit a miscellaneous class—

1. The minute parts of a text. Psalm iv. 6, 7, will exemplify the point : “There are many that say, Who will show us any good?” Suppose the principal head to be an illustration of the anxiety and folly of worldly men, we might observe—

1. The *anxiety* of worldlings. This is often very manifest ; their countenances discover their cares ; they are running about in haste and perplexity in quest of carnal pleasures.

2 It is some *sensible* kind of good they want—“Who will show us any good?” Spiritual, or even intellectual good, is of no value with these uneasy men.

3. Although they may have select objects in view, yet they are not fastidiously nice ; they are for *any carnal good*.

4. They *enquire only of mortals* like themselves, who in their turn have suffered disappointments and vexations. So the blind are actually requesting the blind to lead them to happiness.

5. There are not a few only, but *many*, who are making these enquiries—the great bulk of the world. It was so in the Psalmist’s time, it is so still. Crowds are hurrying to court, crowds to the theatre, crowds to the exchange, to obtain the means to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Simeon on Gen. vi. 5, on antediluvian depravity, remarks that the dispositions of their hearts were—

1. Evil without exception. *Every* imagination was evil.

2. Without mixture—*only* evil.

3. Without intermission—*continually*.

In these instances you see the very words of the respective texts furnish subdivisions.

Also on Isa. xxxv. 8—13. This way is—

1. A *highway*, established by royal authority.

2. A *holy way* : “It shall be called the way of holiness.”

3. A *plain way* : “A wayfaring man shall not err therein.”

4. A *safe way* : “No lion shall be there.” *Sketches of Sermons*, Vol. I., p. 40.

2. In some cases subdivisions may be formed of several *illustrative ideas*. When properly introduced, these have an excellent effect, as in Luke vi. 19 : “There went virtue out of him” (*i. e.* Christ).

POSITION.—All fulness of saving benefits emanates from the Lord Jesus Christ. It proceeds from him,

1. As a copious stream from a liberal fountain. Christ’s blessings are compared to streams, Isa. xxxv. 7 ; Ps. xlv. 4. All spiritual blessings flow from him.

2. As the earth itself is full of life-giving energies, a secondary creative power, received from God (Gen. i. 11, 24) : so Christ is full of spiritual life, John xi. 25 ; xiv. 6 ; Col. iii. 3. It is he who creates the fruit of our lips, Isa. lvii. 19.

3. As the glorious sun is full of light, as the virtues of light and heat emanate from him, without exhausting him, so, and much more, does saving light emanate from our more glorious “Sun of righteousness,” Mal. iv. 2.

4. As the very clouds which obscure the sky, and for a season cover the heavens with blackness, and yet drop down fatness (Ps. lxxv. 11, 12 ; lxxviii. 9), so Christ sends a plentiful rain to refresh his weary inheritance (Ps. lxxviii. 6), and by his mercy causes them to take root downward and bear fruit upward, making them fruitful in every good word and work.

5. As food is replete with life-sustaining power for the support of our bodies, so there is virtue in Christ to sustain the soul. He is the *bread of life* and the *water of life*, to all who believe in him. But more immediately in the sense of the text—

6. As the touch of his garment healed all manner of bodily diseases, so Christ, as the balm of Gilead, heals all diseases of the soul. See 2 Kings xiii. 21.

3. Subdivisions to form the *argument* or evidence of a text are very valuable. John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that he gave," &c. One categorical proposition arising out of this text is this, that Jesus Christ is really the gift of God.

1. He did not come by principles of *nature*.
2. There was nothing among men to *merit* it.
3. Nothing in man to *excite* the least regard.
4. Not the least *proportion* between us and so great a gift.
5. There was on the contrary, an *infinite disproportion*, and not only a disproportion but an *opposition* and a contrariety.—*Claude*.

4. Again: Subdivisions may be formed of *negatives*; as, for instance—

1. We are not to expect the uninterrupted continuance of any measure of health, property, prosperity, or comfort, which we now enjoy.
2. We are not to expect from our social intercourse all the satisfaction which we fondly desire.
3. We are not to expect in the ordinary course of human affairs, constant gratitude from those whom we have most obliged and served.

I add another example, on John xvii. 15. Believers ought not to be taken out of the world,

1. On the *world's* account: for saints are beneficial to it.
2. On *God's* account: they are living testimonies to the power of his grace, &c.
3. On *their own* account: for all things are in this world working together for their good.—*Jay and Simeon*.

5. The several *circumstances* of a text sometimes supply suitable subdivisions; as Luke iv. 18: "To preach deliverance to the captives."

I. Illustrate the CAPTIVITY we are under by nature.

1. The sinner is *under arrest* to the law of God.
2. He is in *darkness*. Prisons are dark and gloomy, fit emblems of a sinner's mind; Isa. xlix. 9; Eph. iv. 18; v. 8; 1 Cor. ii. 14, &c.
3. He is *bound with fetters*. These are called "bonds of iniquity." Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, John viii. 34; 2 Pet. ii. 19.
4. Sinners are *exiles*: Eph. ii. 11, 12; Luke xv. "Those that are far from God shall perish."
5. They are in a *state of want*, like the prodigal.
6. Their whole state is *wretched*: Isa. i. 5, 6; Rev. iii. 17.

II. State the DELIVERANCE which Christ effects for his people.

1. He delivers them from *confinement* (Isa. lxi. 1), pays their debts, and pours oil and wine into their bleeding hearts, Zech. xi. 11; Rom. viii. 1.
2. Upon the darkness of their state he causes the day-spring from on high to shine. Upon those that sat in darkness and the shadow of death the light arises, 2 Cor. iv. 6.
3. He proclaims their liberty before all the world, and declares them free; John viii. 36. This a greater honour than to do it secretly. He says to the prisoners, "Go forth," Isa. xlix. 9.
4. Though once *afar off*, sinners are brought nigh, Eph. ii. 19, 20; John xv. 15; 1 John iii. 1.
5. Though formerly in a state of *want*, feeding on husks, yet now they are restored to *plenty*: the fulness of Christ is opened to them.
6. All kinds of wretchedness are removed.—*Lavington*.

I just add an example from Watts on Rev. vi. 15—17. It is an argumentative address in subdivisions.

The question is, "Why will the wrath of the great day be so terrible to sinners?" The following reasons are assigned:—

1. It is wrath arising from the clearest view of neglected love, mercy, &c., Luke xiii. 34; Heb. ii. 2, 3.
2. Wrath awakened by the rejection of the most precious and most expensive method of salvation, grace slighted and despised.

3. Wrath that must avenge the affronts and injuries done to the prime minister of God's government, and the chief messenger of his mercy.

4. Wrath excited by the long-tried patience of God, Ps. i. 1, 3, 21, 23.

5. Wrath that shall be attended with the fullest conviction of sinners, and their self-condemnation.

6. Wrath that shall be executed immediately and eternally, without any mixture of mercy.

6. As to ideas of a miscellaneous kind, I may observe that whatever has a generality of expression falls easily into subdivisions; of this the scriptures afford examples almost endless, as, "*I can do ALL things through Christ who strengtheneth me,*" Phil. iv. 13. This will appear by consulting Cruden's Concordance, under the word "*every*," or "*all things*." These *all things* admit of specification in distinct parts.* Such words must be carefully taken up, unless the preacher pass over words and ideas strictly textual, to discuss the *subject* of the text, or the principles upon which it is founded. Again: the idea may be general where no such words appear; and where the words of the text are not, strictly speaking, general, they may refer to a variety of particulars deserving of distinct notice. Reference may be made to Cruden under such words as *many* ("there be *many* that say," &c., Ps. iv. 6), *more*, *most*: these must have particulars under them; and they may be taken up, if they be of sufficient importance. Again: many plural nouns, and nouns of multitude, include particulars; as, *abominations*, *afflictions*, *multitude*, &c.

When the text itself expresses the *enumeration* (which is the reverse of the last article), the several parts may be discussed in subdivisions, so far as such particulars have any kind of dissimilarity or unlikeness in any of their subjects or attributes. Thus, if I were to preach from Col. i. 15—19, I should prepare the way for subdivisions by examining whether the several great things said of Christ were of one or more kinds; and here I find them different in their nature, for some things relate to the personal greatness of the Redeemer, some have respect to us, and others respect his mediatorial qualifications and ability to save us. Now under each of these there are textual subdivisions. The same method may be taken with Isaiah ix. 6, 7. Again, those parts of the text which appear as the principal, and are commonly by preachers so discussed, may be drawn into subdivisions by an artificial principal; thus, instead of dividing John i. 17, as Claude—viz.,

I. The ministry of the *law*,

II. The ministry of the *gospel*.

You might

I. Contrast the two dispensations.

II. Draw some important inferences.

By this plan, Claude's principal divisions are thrown into subdivisions, and the way is prepared for the improvement of the subject. Be careful to express in few words, and with the utmost possible precision, the principal heads. This is always desirable.

I must not omit to notice such nouns as, though singular, admit of amplification, and easily fall into subdivisions of considerable beauty. An

* Great care must be taken, in looking into the Concordance for illustrative passages, that we be not led by the mere similarity of *words* to adopt such as in their proper sense have no suitability for the purpose.

instance or two will suffice. The word *mercy* is sometimes in the singular, as in Ps. lxxxv. 7: "Show us thy mercy." In a familiar style of preaching there would be no impropriety in deriving from this word a considerable number of subdivisions; as, *saving mercy, preventing mercy, succouring mercy, &c.* Or such a word as *evil*; as, "Deliver us from evil." This word will furnish opportunity for noticing various kinds of evil, from which we should pray for deliverance. Though such a mode of division may be considered puerile by the logician, no good reason can be given why its occasional adoption should be unfavourable to the communication of substantial instruction. The truth is, as the generality of hearers possess but plain intellects, they require truth in a plain dress, and will comprehend a subject thus treated better than a course of abstract reasoning, or the logical solution of a metaphysical question. I do not say that the preacher should so stoop to the understandings of the people as to lower the dignity of sacred subjects; but certainly he ought to be cautious lest he soar above their reach.

I observe, further, that whatever belongs to *relation* or *description* will admit of subdivisions; as, *creature* belongs to all living animals, and must be divisible; *vegetable* is the common name for everything that grows out of the earth, and is divided and subdivided by Linnaeus into an astonishing variety; so every description of person or thing, and the relation it sustains, admits of subdivisions. Suppose the scripture account of David be the subject. His *character* will form the first or principal division; then, as subdivisions, may be introduced his *descent*—his *early life*—his *call to an important office in the state*—his *private character*—his *public worth*—the *chief acts of his reign*—his *inspiration and prophetic spirit*—his *imperfections*—his *end*. We might also, as the second principal division, consider him as an *eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ*: the points in which he so typified him would form subdivisions, and be highly interesting to a Christian auditory. Not only may this plan be adopted with respect to eminent characters, but also in illustrating those qualities or attributes which belong to intelligent beings, as conscience, understanding, reason, will, &c. Whatever dignifies or degrades the mind, whatever belongs to man through the dispensations of grace and mercy, may be so described, and perhaps cannot be contemplated in one view so well as in subdivisions; and, even where these subdivisions are not named, regard must be had to them in the order of discussion.

The terms expressive of *profit* or *loss, advantage* or *disadvantage* (as 1 Tim. iv. 8; Mark viii. 36; Rom. viii. 13, 18), must have separate and distinct particulars, which may be given in the form of subdivisions; also whatever can be traced as *consequences* from some known cause, as Prov. xiv. 14. The numerous evil consequences of apostacy may thus be affectingly illustrated, and the happy consequences of holy fear; Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10.

Those terms which convey the idea of *pleasure* or *pain* furnish matter applicable to this purpose.

The terms expressive of *activity* or *motion*, as in Ps. lxxxiv. 7; cxix. 32; Heb. xii. 1. There must be many qualities, aids, &c., necessary to the attainment of a good end, and these furnish subdivisions, which flow naturally from the nature of the subject.

Things which agree or harmonize together may be discussed in subdivisions, as Eph. v. 27. There are many things which *become saints*, and belong to their character as such. This leads to the instructive observation

that *there is a train of exalted virtues which belong to saints*; and a wide field is opened for their description. Also Col. i. 12; the *meetness* referred to by the context includes a great variety of graces, each of which may be distinctly named and defined. Again: Though Jehovah can have no equal, yet he must necessarily possess some things in common with the saint, upon which to establish and maintain that concord of which the scripture speaks, Gen. vi. 9; Amos iii. 3. This harmony, or agreement, admits of specification in subdivisions. See also Col. iii. 14: *The bond of perfectness.—Gill in loco.* I may add that which is the most perfect of all harmony, *the harmony of the divine attributes in the scheme of salvation.* Not only mercy and truth, but every divine perfection, perfectly concurs in man's salvation.

Whatever is connected with, or flows from, the reception of any spiritual blessing, or the possession of certain dispositions of mind, may be thrown into the form of subdivisions. For example: if we enquire, What influence has the reception of salvation on the mind of the recipient? or what are the effects of divine grace on his personal conduct? the reply is, Universal holiness in character and conduct, in the family, in the church, in the closet, and in the world: the very reverse of a worldling, or of an apostatizing professor.

Whatever is necessary to a *certain end*, usually termed the connexion of the end with the means, will suggest subdivisions, as 1 Cor. ix. 24: "So run that you may obtain."

I. It is obvious that all the means of grace are intended; and each of these deserves separate consideration.

II. The chief *obstructions* to such an end might be enumerated.

III. The several grounds of encouragement to our *so* running as to obtain the end; and,

IV. A series of directions might be given, not comprehended in the first head; and these also would furnish subdivisions. Each of these general heads furnishes many subdivisions.

Whatever conveys the idea of *immensity* or *diminutiveness* will furnish subdivisions.

Immensity; as God, and his works of providence and grace. These cannot be considered as a whole, but must be viewed in parts. Upon this plan theological writers form their systems of divinity; on this plan, also, systems of natural philosophy are written.

In the discussion of some subjects subdivisions must be parts of the grand whole, judiciously conceived and arranged; and in others they may be introduced as illustrations, at once calculated to instruct the mind and fill the heart with gratitude and love. Booth adopted this method in his *Reign of Grace*.

Diminutiveness will also furnish subdivisions. Those objects and pursuits which the Christian regards as contemptible, in comparison with his nobler employment and better portion; such is *the world's great trinity*—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." The unsatisfying nature and momentary duration of these may be set forth by a variety of particulars of a most instructive kind, so as to exhibit their littleness as in a concave mirror, and, in the hands of a judicious preacher, this may be rendered very effective, by the blessing of God, in producing hatred to sin and love to holiness.

The examples furnished, and the remarks made on divisions and subdivisions, have, I should imagine, sufficiently illustrated their use. I have

but one other observation to make here; and it is this: that the names by which the parts of a discourse have been designated are not fixed and unchangeable. *Principal divisions* are only such when the plan of the discourse places them in the rank of general propositions. *Subdivisions* are so called because they are illustrations of the principal divisions. In some cases, by a change of method, the subdivisions might form principals, and the principals be introduced for illustration. Your own subdivisions on particular branches of one discourse may, if important, be transferred to such parts of another discourse as are of a similar character, if not lately used. This is often done by some eminent preachers.

PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING UP A DISCOURSE.

Having considered the outlines of a discourse, the most copious directions and assistance will be found for filling them up in the subsequent parts of these Lectures, during our progress through the different kinds of discourses, in the various points to be discussed, assisted by the article on Comment: yet I shall here offer you a few previous thoughts for this purpose.

That which takes precedence of every thing else is unquestionably *the assistance of divine teaching*. I hope the times will never return when it will be necessary to place this article in a defensive attitude. James i. 5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." So prayed the martyr, Bishop Ridley: "O heavenly Father, the author and fountain of all truth, the bottomless sea of all understanding, send down, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and enlighten our understandings with the beams of thy heavenly grace." So must we pray for this blessing, if we would engage it for our own benefit and the benefit of our hearers. Here see Bridge's Christian Ministry, p. 72; and Bickersteth's Christian Student, p. 610, second edit. chap. 20. But in defence of this reflection, I may here add the words of Dr. Jortin, who says, "If it be required why we should expect divine assistance, we answer, That it is one of those doctrines which by the light of nature we could not have known. We might have thought it probable, but could not have proved its certainty. It rests on the authority of revealed religion. But it seems to have been an opinion among the heathen that the gods put men on certain actions, suggested to them certain thoughts, and inclined them in a secret manner. We find this frequently in their oldest writer, Homer. Afterwards, when philosophy was cultivated, some of their wise men were of opinion that there was a *divine afflatus*, or interposition, acting on exalted and purified minds, and assisting them in doing well." Now that which they only imagined in reference to their gods comes to us with all divine authority with respect to God's Holy Spirit—that God will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him; and so said our blessed Saviour, John xiv. 26. I wish you the most ample supply of this teaching in ordering your discourses.

The next means to be recommended for filling up a discourse is the careful study of the *divine word*.* This is like Goliath's sword to David, and it is appropriately styled the sword of the Spirit. There is a treasure in the

* It is not here intended to insinuate, that the scriptures are second in *authority* to the Spirit's teaching, as some have maintained. Dr. Wardlaw has amply refuted this dangerous notion in a recent publication.

scriptures which can never be exhausted ; and that this must be pre-eminently the best no one will venture to dispute. Apollos was mighty in the scriptures, and therefore *eloquent* ; Acts xviii. 24. But skill in the ready application of scripture cannot be acquired without great diligence, indefatigable reading, and close meditation. To shorten, however, this labour, you may avail yourself of the works of those valuable men who have formed parallels, as Canne, Brown, Crutwell, Scott,* &c. Such parallels are calculated to illustrate numerous passages of scripture ; and it is now received as an incontrovertible axiom that the scriptures are best interpreted by scripture. Undoubtedly there are various ways of using scripture in preaching the word ; and every man must adopt that method which he finds by experience to be the best : perhaps different methods ought to be tried. But I will venture to describe a method that has been practised with some success ; and I really think that a minister may preach acceptably and usefully in this way with no other help in study than parallels, a Concordance, and a Dictionary of the Bible.† This must be very encouraging to preachers who have few books and less leisure.

The method is this :—Suppose my text to be Ps. xxvi. 8 : “*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house,*” &c. After briefly expounding the text, I should state the subject to be *public worship*, and then divide as follows ;—

- I. The nature and importance of public worship.
- II. Its various attractions to a good man.
- III. The force of example, as furnished by the text.
- IV. The guilt and danger of neglect.

I then select the parallel passages from such works as I have named ; and that I may receive the full benefit of them, and have the whole of them in view, I form a list of them on paper in the following manner :—

- Exodus xx. 24 : In all places where I record my name, &c.
 Matt. xviii. 20 : Wherever two or three are gathered together, &c.
 1 Chron. xix. 3 : I have set my affections upon the house, &c.
 Ps. xxviii. 7 : I will dwell in the house of the Lord, &c.
 xxvii. 4—6 : One thing have I desired of the Lord, &c.
 xlii. 4 : For I had gone with the multitude, &c.
 lxxiii. 17 : Until I went into the sanctuary of God.
 lxxxiv. 1 : How amiable are thy tabernacles.
 xcv. throughout ; and Ps. xlviii. 9.
 cxxxii. 13 : The Lord hath chosen Sion.
 Isa. iv. 2 : The mountain of the Lord's house shall be, &c.
 xxv. 6 : And in this mountain the Lord will, &c.
 lvi. 7 : I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.
 Luke ii. 46—49 : Christ honoured the temple.
 xix. 46 : Christ quoted Isa. lvi. 7.
 Acts ii. 46 : The primitive Christians honoured the temple.
 Heb. x. 25 : Paul exhorted from forsaking public worship.
 Ps. lxxiii. 27 : Those that are far from God shall perish.
 Zech. xiv. 17, 18 : Threatening of drought and plague.
 Ps. xcv. 11 : Unto whom I swore, &c.
 Isa. lvi : Those are blessed that keep God's sabbaths.
 lviii. 13, 14 : Similar promises.

* See also the sentiments of Bishop Horsley, quoted in Lecture XXIX.

† Besides Buck's and Brown's we are now favoured with one from the late R. Watson. [The Bible Dictionary by Dr. Wm. Smith, Kitto's Cyclopedia by Dr. Alexander, and Dr. Eadie's excellent compendium. The second named is on many accounts preferable, as some of Dr. Smith's contributors are wanting in due care and reverence of expression.]

Sam. ii. 30: Those that honour me I will honour.

Matt. iv. 10: Thou shalt worship.

Ps. lxxxvii. 2: The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.

Many scriptures may occur to my mind, while in the act of composing, that were not in the list. These, as being appropriate, I adopt; while, on the other hand, many quotations on my list do not suit my subject, and are consequently rejected. I now commence the discourse as follows:—

I. The nature and importance of public worship.

It is in a *united* and *social* capacity that it is here to be considered, though private worship is not to be dispensed with; therefore (see Psalm xlii. 4.), said David, “I had gone with the *multitude*.” It is happiness, indeed, when the *multitude* press to God’s house to express their praises, to utter their prayers, to hear God’s holy word, to be publicly instructed in divine things.

1. Viewed with respect to *God*.

1.) Nothing is more rational; Acts xvii. 28.

2.) God requires it; Matt. iv. 10; Zech. xiv. 16.

3.) He directs its performance; John iv. 24.

2. With respect to the *world*. Take away the sabbath and its advantages, and there must be confusion and every evil work.

3. With respect to *individuals*. Every one has a debt of gratitude to pay, petitions to offer, a soul to be fed: most truly might it be said that the “Sabbath was made for man;” Mark ii. 27.

II. Its various attractions to a good man.

1. The house of God is the place of *promise*; Ex. xx. 24: 1 Sam. ii. 30; Matt. xviii. 20; Isa. ii. 2; Ps. cxxxii. 13—17; Isa. xxv. 6: vi. 7; lviii. 13; Ps. lxxxvii. 2. These may be severally expatiated upon by annotation and comment: it will be seen that they are all furnished by the list.

2. It is the place of *instruction*, where gifts are exercised for this end; Eph. iv. 8; Acts ix. 31; Cant. ii. 34; nay, even a dispensation of Providence could not be understood till a visit was made to the house of God; Ps. lxxiii. 13.

3. It is a place of *delight* and *satisfaction*; 1 Chron. xxix. 3; Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4—6; xlii. 4; lxxxiv. 1, 2.

III. The force of example.

1. David; see text, and Ps. xxvii. 4; xxiii. 6, &c.

2. Our Lord himself; Luke iv. 16; Acts ii. 46.

3. The first Christians; Acts ii. 46; and xx. 7.

IV. The guilt and danger of neglect. The more excellent a thing is, the greater the folly and guilt of neglecting it. For this part see list; Ps. lxxiii. 27; 1 Sam. ii. 30; Zech. xiv. 17, 19; Ps. xc. 11; Heb. x. 25.

The next means to be recommended is *the study of the works of pious authors*. Although this is objected to, by some in our day, as being unnecessary and anti-scriptural, yet you should undoubtedly acquaint yourself with the opinions of commentators. These are generally sound in doctrine, for no one essentially corrupt would venture on a commentary. None can object to such works as those of Dwight, Henry, Gill, Fuller, and those enumerated in Bickersteth’s catalogues, &c. Nor should printed sermons be disregarded; for, if we are not “to despise prophesyings” *viva voce*, why despise them in a printed form? But in sermonizing you should think for yourself before you consult the works of others; this is a general and important rule.

A convincing proof of the benefit of reading the works of others is furnished in our judges and leading counsellors, who appear to have succeeded in the attainment of true *eloquence* above any order of men in the world,* and this because they are the most *penetrating* and *diligent readers* of the laws of nations, the ancient constitutions, laws, and customs of their country,

* From this, rather than for their classical acquirements, they have the title of *learned*.

and of the commentaries and adjudged cases that have been published upon these laws. Their reading is never remitted. Some new law work is perpetually making new demands upon their diligence, and wealth and honour crown their labours at last, if Providence spare their lives. The maturity of their powers raises them to eminence, not only in their own profession, but also in the houses of parliament, and even in the cabinet, where also they often rise superior to other men. We attribute much to native talent, but more to the improvement of that talent by reading and study. Let the Christian minister, therefore, keep these men in his eye, and imitate their diligence, not for the sake of worldly wealth and honour, but for the good of souls and the honour which cometh from God.

Finally, I recommend *meditation*. You will find great advantage in reading Bridge's Christian Ministry on this subject, p. 241 of first edit., chap. ii., sect. 2 : and I may here quote the directions of the late Mr. Fuller, of Kettering, which are truly valuable. The method recommended is that of obtaining the chief part of a sermon by *meditation*. The mind will never know its own resources unless properly exercised ; the habit of thinking closely will present many things to it which would not otherwise have been thought of, and the more the invention is exercised the more fertile it will become.

Upon the subject of thus meditating a sermon, he observes, " When your text is selected, meditate on the context, and by it get clear notions of your text. Then, and not till then, consult expositors ; if their opinions appear the best, take them ; at any rate, do not proceed till you are satisfied that you perceive the mind of the Holy Spirit in the passage. Then examine the force of each word or term of importance in the text ; do this by observing the use of the same expression in other places of Scripture by a Concordance ; but take care of an injudicious use of this book, for it may be, by misuse, a great sermon-spoiler ; that is, when a jingle of sounds is put for expository sense. *Words* and *terms* may be examined to great advantage by a judicious use of *contrast*, a placing them, one at a time, in opposition to those which are intended to convey a different meaning. The following may serve as an example. Suppose your text be Ps. cxlv. 16 : 'Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' Begin with the term *openest* ; 'Thou openest thy hand.' What an idea does this convey of the paternal *goodness* of God towards his creatures ! how opposite to the conduct of many of his creatures towards one another, whose hearts and hands are *shut* ! What an idea does it convey of the *ease* with which the wants of the whole creation are supplied ! Let me pause a moment, and think of these wants. What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is daily consumed in one town—in one large city—in a nation—in the whole world ! yet mankind only compose a small part of this vast family ; it includes 'every *living thing*.' O what innumerable wants throughout all animate nature, in the air—on the earth—in the waters ! Whence come their supplies ? 'Thou openest thy hand,' and all are satisfied. And can these various necessities be supplied by only opening his hand ? What then must our salvation be ? This is a work of wonderful expense. The Lord opens his hand in providence ; but he has 'purchased the church with his own blood.' And then meditate on the *variety of ways* used for our supply. The earth is made fruitful, the air is

full of life, the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, the sun pours forth its genial rays; but the operation of all these second causes is only the 'opening of his hand.' Parents sustain us, ways are opened for our future subsistence, connexions are formed, &c.; but all these are but the 'opening of his hand;' see Ps. civ. 27—29. You may next notice the pronoun *Thou*; 'Thou openest,' &c. Here, in contrast, as I said, it is easy to infer—If thou openest thy hand, I ought not to shut mine against my poor brother. [And here we are provided with an excellent application of the subject.] Next consider the term *hand*; there is a difference between the hand and the *heart*. God opens his hand in providence to his worst enemies; he gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth (see Jer. xxvii. 6); but he opens his heart in the gospel of his Son. This is the better portion of the two. Let us pray, with Jabez, to be blessed indeed, that we may have Joseph's portion, not only the precious things of the earth, but also the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush. Proceed 'Thou *satisfiest* the desire,' &c. Here I see that God does not give sparingly [this is the contrast]. It seems to be the characteristic of the divine nature, both in the natural and moral world, to excite desires, not to disappoint, but to satisfy them."

This, then, is my author's method of meditating a discourse, and it brings to our minds similar turns of thought in Matthew Henry.

"Next," my author says, "endeavour to dispose of these thoughts to advantage, by placing them in due order. Many sermons are little better than a mob of ideas; they contain some good sentiments, but have no object in view which is steadily pursued for two minutes, nor any order in the parts that can assist either speaker or hearer, nor any unity of the whole. Upon an inspection of these thoughts it will be plain the subject must be *Divine Providence*; and this will thus divide:—I. Explain the doctrine of providence. II. Establish it. III. Improve it." Under these principal divisions the thoughts produced by meditation are to be arranged, and such other thoughts added as are apposite to the subject.

To those whose pecuniary resources are limited, or whose business denies them the necessary time for reading extensively, the plan of pure meditation offers its valuable aid. I readily grant that to arrive at our object solely by meditation is very difficult in our first attempts. There is so great a degree of obtuseness in the mind that it may not at first penetrate into the subject; or, if we perceive something of the meaning or excellence of a passage, yet it is but dimly, and not sufficiently to guide us to its fulness; but let us think again and again, and, by degrees, we shall obtain those discoveries which will amply reward our labour. "Those works of God which are most plain have wonders in them, if we could find them out; so in the plainest text of scripture there is a world of holiness and spirituality; and if we, in prayer and dependence upon God, did sit down and consider it, we should behold much more than appears to us. It may be, at once reading or looking, we see little or nothing, as Elijah's servant; he went out once, and saw nothing; therefore he was commanded to look seven times. 'What now?' says the prophet. 'I see a cloud rising like a man's hand;' and by and by the whole surface of the heavens was covered with clouds. So you may look lightly on a scripture, and see nothing; look again, and you will see a little; but look seven times upon it, *meditate* often

upon it, and then you shall see a light like the light of the sun.”* 1 Kings xviii. 43, 45.

I may here add, let the student consult Owen on Hebrews, vol. iv., p. 178, and some pages forward in the same volume. If meditation be considered a part of study, then see Mr. Bridges, p. 43, or his Index, word *Study*.

In connexion with the plan of meditating a sermon, I may here offer you a few hints for *tracing out an idea*. The following little scheme has been particularly useful to myself; and I can, therefore, put my *probatum est* to it. It would be of essential service to those who use Simeon, and who find a difficulty when they arrive at his breaks or ledger lines—the marks for enlargement. Indeed, it has been justly observed that as much talent is required to fill up the breaks as to construct the outline. I will give you an instance of Mr. Simeon’s breaks.

“There is nothing more injurious to ourselves or others than prejudice :—while it operates as a bar to our own improvement, it leads us to put a perverse construction on every thing we see or hear.—It will extract matter for censure even from the most innocent or laudable actions.—This malignity cannot be seen in more striking colours than in the conduct of the Pharisees towards our Lord.—”

It must be evident that some one or more of the plans employed for constructing a whole discourse must be resorted to for the management of a single idea, and the only difference lies in the *longum* or the *brevum* of the case. It will be equally necessary if the thought to be expanded be your own, which is the more honourable of the two instances. To proceed : the rules must be something like the following :—

1. State the idea in the clearest form of words, as in Mr. Simeon’s example.

2. If it should require a sentence or two to make it better understood by the ignorant, this must be yielded to, or all that you say afterwards will be lost; and, even when not absolutely required in order to render the subject intelligible, judicious *amplification* may often be employed with excellent effect; and this is the more necessary at the beginning of a discourse, because it may give an aspect to all that follows throughout the whole discussion. The want of such amplification may give the hearers an opportunity to say : “You have brought us to the portico of a fine building, and left us there, instead of showing the different apartments contained in the building itself, and the magnificent furniture.” The scriptures furnish many beautiful examples of amplification, as the songs of Moses and of Deborah, and Ecclesiastes iii., where the first verse contains the statement of which the seven following verses are the amplification. Caryl, the celebrated expositor of the book of Job, having to expound ch. xxxiv. 29, “When he (God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” on the 5th of November (the day of the gunpowder plot, which, at that time, was kept with great zeal, though now almost forgotten), availed himself of the circumstance in the following amplification :—

“Would it not,” says he, “have made trouble to destroy the king, the chief governor of these nations, with his royal issue, in one day? Would it not have made trouble to blow up the representatives of the nation, the parliament, in one day? Would it not have made trouble to throw the whole body of the people into a com-

* Caryl on Job.—Caryl confirmed the excellency of his own rule throughout his whole exposition on Job. His observations discover a fecundity of thought that must surprise every attentive reader.

plete heap, without a head, in one day? Would it not have made trouble in the nation to have seen papal power, with popish doctrines and worship, brought in again in a few days? Would it not have made trouble to have seen the poor souls imprisoned, persecuted, and consumed to ashes for their conscientious witness-bearing to the truth of the gospel? Would it not have made trouble to have lost our civil liberties, and to have had a yoke of spiritual bondage laid upon our necks, by far worse than Egyptian taskmasters? Would it not have made trouble to spill the blood of thousands? Was it not to attempt all these things, which probably would have been the issue of that plot, if it had succeeded? Let us praise the Lord, who was pleased to prevent it, and said, *It shall not be.* They did everything to make trouble but prosper in their designs. They took secret counsel—they took oaths—yea, they took the sacrament, to ensure the secrecy of those counsels: all this they did to the making of trouble; but they could not. God said, at that time, *let England be in QUIETNESS.*”*

3. If the idea has still any difficulty, it may require *illustration*. Mr. Simeon illustrates the passage referred to and quoted, by commenting on the circumstances which gave rise to it. The 1st, 16th, and 18th topics in these lectures show the fecundity of the illustrative field. Scripture illustrations, however, will be most efficient, and especially those of our blessed Saviour. Jeremy Taylor, Dr. Manton, Chalmers, &c., have been very eminent in this almost sublime art.

4. An idea may also require *confirmation*; the short and good old way is to bring in scripture proofs, with short and pithy reasoning, managed with good sense; but great extension, for the present occasion, it is not to be expected.

5. A short comment, of a select and suitable kind, may be very forcible and popular: for which see general index on the word *comment*. It is evident that our best writers excel in this management of an idea; and the best preachers obtain their popularity in this way.

Let us now try whether we can apply these rules to the filling up of Mr. Simeon's breaks in the foregoing specimen.

There is nothing more injurious to ourselves or others than prejudice, by which I would be understood to mean a state of mind often imperceptibly attained in favour of any system to which we have been accustomed, without any definite or distinct recognition of the reasons on which such preference is founded. Many persons entertain very strong religious opinions, not because they have examined the grounds of those opinions, and arrived at a settled conviction from a full perception of the solid and scriptural basis on which they rest, but because they have been accustomed to hear them urged with frequency and warmth, and the contrary opinions denounced as fraught with every species of mischief; and while they are totally unable to give a satisfactory reason for their sentiments, they are nevertheless prevented by this state of mind from feeling the weight or appreciating the force of opposing evidence. Hence the maxim of the wise man, “A fool is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.” If the evil consequences of prejudice were confined to ourselves, still we could not be too much on our guard against it, but unhappily this is not the fact; for, *while it operates as a bar to our own improvement, it leads us to put a perverse construction on every thing we see or hear*, as the eye of a person afflicted with the jaundice is said to give a yellow tinge to every object at which he looks. *It will extract matter for censure even from the most innocent or laudable actions*; for, since the very same actions may be performed from a great variety of motives, nothing is more easy than to attribute that which is most commendable to base and unworthy principles, contrary to the sacred rule of charity, which requires us to put the best construction which the case will admit upon the conduct of others. It was thus that the enemies of Daniel treated his scrupulous adherence to the worship of Jehovah, ascribing his conduct to disloyalty and perverseness. *The malignity of such a practice cannot be seen in more striking colours than in the conduct of the Pharisees towards our Lord.*—Woodrow.

* See also Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric, vol. I. 418. Edition, 1803.

In offering so great a variety of assistance, I hope there is no danger of perplexing instead of helping you. I hope you will be able to see that each aid has its peculiar office. A skilful mechanic is not perplexed by viewing a large chest of tools of great variety, because, at the same time, he sees the separate use of each. So I wish you to see the separate use and application of each distinct article, "that you may be a workman that need not be ashamed."

LECTURE III.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF DIVISION.

THE various kinds of division to which I shall have occasion to advert I will now present to you. They are textual or topical. The textual are such as fall into—

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The <i>natural kind</i> of
division. | 5. The <i>regular</i> . |
| 2. The <i>accommodational</i> . | 6. The <i>interrogative</i> . |
| 3. The <i>expository</i> . | 7. The <i>observational</i> . |
| 4. The <i>distributive</i> . | 8. The <i>propositional</i> . |
| | 9. That of <i>continued application</i> . |

The topical kinds of division are extremely numerous, and, as you will see, are such as sustain a real distinctiveness of character. The topics form a very valuable acquisition to the divinity student, as will at once be evident on inspection. In addition to their use as a basis for division, they will also lend their aid in furnishing a part or parts of textual discourses, and suggesting ideas for enlargement and amplification; so that these topics are either principals or auxiliaries, *pro re nata*, and sources of thought in an almost endless variety.

The first nine kinds of division I have called *textual*, for on the text they are established. And it is necessary to remind you that they take their distinctive names from the *form* of the outline they present, more than from any peculiarity in the mode of discussion. Thus only one kind is called *expository*, yet several others, and particularly the interrogative, may be very suitable for an expository discourse; indeed, in whatever method a text is examined, explained, and enforced, it comes into the expository. You will also perceive that the observational plan, so far as the *division* is concerned, is nearly allied to the propositional. Yet I allow these imperfections to pass, to preserve the names and kinds as they stand, being satisfied that utility is to be preferred to the niceties of critical and logical accuracy. The several forms, with the remarks and illustrations of each respectively, will, I trust, show the propriety of distinguishing them by such names as I have adopted.

THE NATURAL DIVISION.

The order in which the words of many passages of scripture stand is so natural, and the arrangement of the subject so obvious, that no art can place them in a clearer point of view. In such case you have only to distinguish the several members of the text by appropriate names.

Claude furnishes an instance of this order on Eph. i. 3. His divisions are as follows :—

- I. Here is a grateful acknowledgement—"Blessed be God."
- II. The *title* under which Paul blesses God—"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- III. The *reason* why he blesses God—"He hath blessed us."
- IV. The *plenitude* of this blessing—"With all blessings."
- V. The *nature* or kind of them—"Spiritual blessings."
- VI. The *place* where, &c.—"In heavenly places."
- VII. *In whom* he has blessed us—"In Jesus Christ."

There are many instances of beautiful simplicity in the divisions adopted by our modern preachers, somewhat resembling the above. Generally speaking, such divisions will admit of sub-divisions ; as in Walker's Sermon on 1 John v. 11.

- I. God hath given us eternal life.
- II. This life is in his Son.
 1. As Mediator.
 2. As he is the source of life.
 3. As secured in him.

Another from the same author, on Heb. ix. 28.

- I. The particulars respecting his *first* appearance.
- II. He shall appear the *second time* unto salvation.
 1. To raise the dead bodies of the saints.
 2. To complete his body, the church.
 3. To publicly acquit his followers, as their Judge.
- III. He shall appear a second time *without sin*.
- IV. The characters of those to whom this second coming will be joyous : such as *look for him*.
 1. With a firm belief of the event.
 2. With desire.
 3. With patience.
 4. With habitual preparedness.

From the Cripplegate Morning Exercises. 2 Pet. i. 14 : "Knowing that shortly I must put off," &c. We have here,

- I. A description of our *mortal* part—"A *tabernacle*."
- II. The manner in which we part with it—"We *put it off*."
- III. The *time* when the event shall occur—"Shortly."
- IV. The *means* of knowing it—"Our Lord has *shown us*."

From Burder's Village Sermons. Tit. ii. 11, 12.

- I. The Gospel of Christ is the grace or gift of God.
- II. It brings salvation.
- III. It has appeared to all men.
- IV. It teaches us to live a holy life.

From Beddome, on Rev. iii. 20.

- I. If any man hear my voice—(with three subdivisions.)
- II. And open the door—(with three ditto.)
- III. I will come in to him—(with three ditto.)
- IV. I will sup with him, and he with me.

There is still another form of the natural division, which I will attempt to elucidate by the following example. I adduce it now for a particular purpose, though I shall refer to it again. It is from Mr. Simeon. The text is Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27 : "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean," &c., &c. On this he observes that the great promise of the New Testament church, which was to follow the ascension of Christ, was the gift of the Holy Spirit, who, in the dispensations of grace,

I. Cleanses from sin :—"I will sprinkle," &c.

II. Renews the Heart :—"A new heart also will I give you."

III. Sanctifies the life :—"I will put my Spirit within you."

It will be observed that, in the former instances, single members of a text or verse are made to form so many parts. In this last instance several are classed together and titled; yet the original conception of natural division is preserved.

I shall add but one more example under this head, and this also is taken from Mr. Simeon. The text is 2 Cor. v. 10, 11 : "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," &c. Here we have,

I. The apostle's account of the day of judgment (ver. 10).

II. The improvement which he made of it (ver. 11).

Here we have a division, but no interruption is given to the natural order of things. The statements are assumed as facts, and commented on in the most serious and impressive manner that the preacher can possibly assume, without critical explanation or regular proofs, which however might if thought needful, be brought in, as a subdivision of the first head.

Now, as a general idea respecting the preceding kinds of the natural division, it is obvious that they owe something to the *form* of division, but more to the *use* that is made of them. Their excellence consists in their simplicity, and they are valuable in proportion as this simplicity is preserved. "This plain and easy way of preaching without divisions," says one (that is, without artificial division), "is wonderfully adapted to the capacities, and inclinations too, of a multitude of hearers; and such a method, purged of artificial logic, will one day or other, it is hoped, universally prevail."—*Robinson's Notes on Claude*.

I am decidedly of opinion that a great number of passages are admirably adapted to this kind of division, especially long texts having a number of affirmative particulars* *en suite*, notwithstanding the ridicule so often thrown upon this method of treating them, provided such discourses are closed by a suitable and fervid address: this, I think, is always indispensable.

The following passages may be specified as examples: Isa. xli. 17, 18; Micah vii. 18—22; Hos. xiv. 5, 7.† Sometimes a climax is found in such passages; I think in two of those now referred to, viz., Micah vii. 18—22, perhaps in Isa. xli. 17, 18; at least, every additional clause adds new weight to the subject, or heightens the sense of the grace recorded.

In closing this part of the present Lecture, I may observe that this kind of discourse is well suited to week-day evening lectures, or to small congregations of a serious character, when the preacher has no design to assume the orator, but rather to consider himself as a friend among friends, desirous of imparting "some spiritual gift" for the establishment of their faith. Ministers certainly require occasional relief; they cannot always keep the powers of their minds on the full stretch; and this simple method will, I think, be found to afford them a suitable relief. Care must, however, be taken that they do not degenerate into dulness, nor permit themselves to indulge too frequently in any one method as a refuge for idleness.

THE ACCOMMODATIONAL DIVISION.

A just and perspicuous arrangement of any subject is the beauty of

* See Henry's commentary on Phil i. 9—11, and many other passages.

† See Simeon's Works, on the above passages.

science; and a classification of the several kinds of division, connecting with it their appropriate style and manner, must possess both beauty and utility. The differences of things exist in nature, but art discovers and arranges them. Here, however, a difficulty is confessed, and also my inability to surmount it; for as the colours of the rainbow blend into each other, and defy our marking exactly where one ends and another begins, so will one kind of discourse frequently mingle with that bordering upon it; and we must either put up with a little imperfection, or throw things together in an undistinguished heap. It is highly desirable that appropriate names should be given to the several kinds of division; and one would think that this were easily done, since the family is not immensely large; but here, even in the second article, we are beset with a difficulty—the very second branch of the family must either go without a name or receive one of an indistinctive character. I shall therefore now, as in my former work, denominate this kind of division the ACCOMMODATIONAL. The specimens which I shall give of this kind of division are, with one exception, in two parts only; they are *general expressions which embrace the obvious sense of the text, or general ideas furnished by the text*. If there be any thing in the text that requires explication, or any thing that would not fall in with the preacher's train of thought in the body of the discourse, such particulars may be assigned to the exordium. But where much explication is necessary this form must be abandoned.

In this kind of division the preacher is not bound by those strict rules which some other kinds of division necessarily impose upon him. Here he is emancipated from every rule but that of good sense. If we except the explicatory division, this takes the largest range; or, we may say, it describes the largest circle, for it will be found applicable to an immense number of texts. It also takes the shortest time for its arrangement, varies the most in form and structure, borrows most freely of other divisions as to secondary purposes, is most assisted by topical ideas in reference to the matter to be introduced, allows the most excursive range of thought, and, finally, suits the talents of the greatest number of preachers. Nevertheless, it should not be adopted except when it is evidently the best, or for some special reasons. *Ne quid nimis*, says the old adage—"Do not take too much of any thing."

But there is an important observation to be here made, and which will be also necessary with respect to some other kinds of division—viz., that, as it is not strictly regular, its irregularity, in whatever it may happen to consist, must be carefully remembered and supplied by the skill of the preacher. For, though the form of this discourse is irregular, yet we must preserve as much regularity as possible. Care must be taken, when technical or topical expressions are introduced, that to uneducated people they be well explained, or that these school forms of expression be put into common language. This will be a very good exercise for the student. A preacher's own discretion must direct him in such cases: he should not be fond of showing his learning; nor, on the other hand, be quite ashamed of it, and thereby lower the credit of preaching.

Although I have opened a very wide space to this sort of division, yet in point of fact its claims are not satisfied. Its nature will be found in my examples. Many divisions, which I shall hereafter call topical, might, with equal propriety, be classed under the accommodational. It is not, therefore, extraordinary that I was unable to find a more appropriate name for it.

In constructing a discourse of this species it will be proper to consider whether the text requires a supplement,—that is, whether the sermon would be incomplete without the introduction of some idea not contained in the words of the text. Should such addition be necessary, it must be supplied according to the judgment of the preacher; for, whatever form a discourse may assume, there must be some approach to completeness. The immediate context of the passage will frequently furnish all that is necessary for the purpose. But my meaning will probably be more fully understood by referring to some examples.

Sometimes the first part is supplied, but not the third: this is the case in Rev. iii. 17, 18: "Because thou sayest, I am rich," &c. This text suggests,

- I. The state of self-deceived Christians. This is a regular first.
- II. The advice which our Lord gives them (while in that state).

The second is the main burden of the text; but there is no third. Mr. Simeon supplies this by his improvement; but in such case the preacher should take care to show the awful consequences of refusing Christ's counsel; and though it be done but briefly, and without professedly doing so, yet the end of the regular plan of discussion is answered. But in another instance we find the first part wanting, and then it must be introduced in the exordium. As, for instance, Mr. Simeon's outline on Rev. iii. 20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," &c. Mr. S. on this remarks,

- I. The wonderful condescension of Christ to sinners.
- II. The mercies he desires to impart to them.

This almost inimitable accommodational division is not regular; for there is nothing particularly said about Christ as the speaker, in the text, as the person speaking or acting, as you will hereafter learn, when I come to treat of the regular division; yet here Mr. S. has judiciously supplied this in his exordium, as follows: "It is usual for inferiors to wait upon their superiors; and the greater their inferiority, the more patience is expected from them. But here the God of heaven waits upon his sinful creatures." This he marks as a passage for enlargement, and the requisite amplification might be thus supplied: "He who was rich for our sakes became poor. He to whom every knee shall bow himself supplicates admission. He who came to seek and to save that which was lost disdains not any means to accomplish his all-benevolent purpose." Now this, I say, answers the end of a first regular head, without any occasion to mark it as such, and the second and third parts are sufficiently regular.

I will give another case wherein the third part, which is the object or end, is wanting: John xii. 27: "Now is my soul troubled," &c., &c. Here we have,

- I. The depth of Christ's troubles.
- II. The grounds of his submission to them.

This may remain, as to its division, an accommodational division, without the object or end being expressed in the third part, which would be done by our supplying this defect in the application, by adding, "Do we not see in the reality of Christ's sufferings, as their end, the ground of all our hopes?" etc. Were they not for "us men, and for our salvation?" etc. Now, by expatiating on this topic, we obtain the purpose of a third part or head of discussion.

With such cautions as those now mentioned, the accommodational plan may be pursued with great advantage, and the additional variety of examples which I shall now produce will, I hope, contribute something towards securing that advantage. The selection has been made with the greatest care, and with the strictest possible regard to my own rule. Let the student advert to Mr. Simeon, in his 221st skeleton, wherein he treats of conversion to God, from John iii. 3 : "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Mr. Simeon's exordium is very beautifully formed upon the twenty-sixth topic, *Distinguish*, a very important topic, indeed, though it is by Claude, like *Evidence*, but just hinted at. "There is," says Mr. S., "an essential difference between divine and human knowledge," etc. Having confirmed this idea very briefly, yet very effectually, he proposes to consider,

I. The nature of regeneration.

II. Its necessity.

These two heads are evidently formed on the accommodational plan. They open the subject well, as far as he designed it to be opened. The first part he treats both negatively and positively : in the negative part he shows that neither is baptism nor any partial change of life regeneration. I should have added a caution against persons satisfying themselves with a little melting, or a slight moving of the affections, under a sermon, and against mere proselytism from one set of opinions to another. For, though I would cheerfully admit the very lowest mark of conversion *that the scriptures declare to be such*, yet I cannot forget that nature alone may weep for a moment. This remark I introduce because I think ministers and Christian societies sometimes err in receiving members upon these slight grounds ; and, what is worse, they encourage the persons so slightly affected for years afterwards to reckon themselves converted to God. Preachers ought to be very clear in their manner of stating this point. Mr. Simeon, in his second subdivision, very clearly lays it down that it is "a new creation"—a renewing of the faculties, passions, affections, appetites, desires, etc. ; that this is a supernatural work : it is to be "born of the Spirit." So far Mr. Simeon is right ; but then ministers should remember that this work has a beginning. If tender-hearted young converts are told that the whole of these effects must be produced before they can be considered in a state of safety, they will be thrown into a state of despair. Insisting on so much is inadvertently "breaking the bruised reed." The great difficulty then is, in preaching upon this subject, to save the doctrine without destroying (so to speak) the new creature, as it comes into the world of grace, as Pharaoh destroyed the Israelites' infants ; for as yet the babe of grace only begins to see, to feel, to taste, and to understand. One would think it not very difficult to distinguish between the work of God and the mere natural moving of the affections. God's work is seen in many scripture instances ; we find that these always end in complete renewal, though from slight beginnings ; and I repeat that too much attention cannot be paid to these distinctions.*

The text is an awakening declaration to the legalist, to the self-righteous, to the secure, and the profane. In this sense it is a merciful and gracious

* [On this subject the reader should study with much care, "Regeneration," by the Rev. William Anderson, of Glasgow.]

monition that in their present state they can neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God ; that is, the gospel state. They can neither see its glory and beauty, nor enjoy its blessings. But "the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad ; they shall be exalted to safety." True it is, there is much work to be done before the complete believer, the full-grown Christian, is exhibited ; yet the work is begun, and this is the only point to be considered in the passage. The infant in grace begins to breathe celestial air, longs for the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby, and discerns, though imperfectly, some objects in the kingdom of God, feels these things to be absolutely necessary, and is excited strongly to the use of means. Christ is precious to him ; he mourns over the power of sin, and often cries out under a sense of his guilt. We here fall in with that striking illustration of the text which our Lord has given us in the 18th chapter of Matthew : "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In the early days of grace, a child-like simplicity, docility of mind, and submission, must be regarded as the characteristics of a Christian, and things in which the unrenewed are not partakers.

Much beyond this representation I do not recommend students and younger ministers to advance on this subject ; but if such elaborate treatises as those of Charnock, Witherspoon, or Dwight, should fall in your way, read them by all means ; but, in addressing young converts, carefully avoid whatever might tend to throw them into distress and perplexity.

It is now time to notice Mr. Simeon's second part,—viz., "The necessity of regeneration." This part agrees with its first, and completes the accommodational division. His subdivisions are : 1. We cannot without it enter into the kingdom of grace. 2. We cannot enter into the kingdom of glory. Now, although the discussion of these points assumes something of the propositional form, it is proper and unavoidable. For I have already observed to you that the accommodational plan borrows from all kinds ; that is, it borrows a little, yet not so much as to alter its character. Mr. Simeon's point in this part is to demonstrate that, in an unconverted state, we can neither fulfil the requirements of the gospel here, nor be fitted for heaven hereafter. Christ, in the text, annuls all hopes of the kind, even the fairest ; all the fallacies on which the mind of man is prone to place dependence must be abandoned ; monkish austerities, philosophical refinement, natural virtue, with all its loveliness—all must be sacrificed at the foot of the cross, of which we have an example in the apostle Paul, Phil. iii. May I be allowed to add that the whole state of nature is directly at variance with a state of grace. There is no spiritual life ; there is an unsubdued spirit, an ignorance of spiritual things which no mere head-knowledge can supply, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Again, there is in the unrenewed heart a delight in, an enjoyment of, those things which God abhors. The natural man lives to the flesh, and after the flesh. These things are fully proved by scripture, observation, and experience ; so that the necessity is so undeniable that a stronger case cannot be made out.

Mr. Simeon then, by way of peroration, addresses, 1. The unregenerate, alleging that, upon the evidence produced, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God here, nor, dying in that state, into the kingdom of heaven hereafter ; consequently their repentance is called for by reason, by scripture, for self-preservation, and, as yet, not without hope. 2. He addresses

the converted, or such as are born again, reminding them that they are laid under the highest obligations to "show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9.

I have already intimated that this mode of division comprehends within its grasp general expressions which embrace the obvious sense of the text, or general ideas furnished, or suggested, or justified by it, as a means of instruction. If my examples are carefully examined, or analysed, we shall, I presume, obtain the key which will open to us the principles of these divisions, or which will show us the sources from which such expressions are derived. They appear to contain the sense or ideas of the text in descriptive or declarative forms, very often in technical or topical language. Or in some parts they comport with the preacher's design, though not at all expressed in the text; in other words, they are supplementary to it. I shall for the present adduce a few instances, just sufficient for explanation, and no more.

Some of these contain the sense of the text in a descriptive manner; as Simeon on Jer. ix. 22—24.

- I. Remove false and insufficient grounds.
- II. Propose such as are true.

Zechariah xii. 10: "I will pour upon the house of David," &c.

- I. The history of the promise.
- II. Its blessedness.
 1. In its general character.
 2. In the effects produced.

This is a most simple and beautiful division: the author enters on the description or portraiture of the two leading circumstances of the text, and his plan is highly worthy of imitation.

Others give the meaning of the text declaratively: that is, they merely declare what the sense is, but divided into its parts. See Simeon on Eph. v. 14. Here, says Mr. S., we have,

- I. A command.
- II. A promise.

The discussion is to unfold these in their order.

Again: There are texts which contain the end and the means, the cause and the effect, the principle and the consequence deduced from the principle, the action and the principle of the action, the occasion and what led to it. Now these I call technical or school phrases, and the ideas included in a text will very frequently and justly be discussed by means of these terms, as Claude on Isa. lv. 6.

- I. What is implied.
- II. What is expressed.

Mr. Simeon, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

- I. The cause of repentance.
- II. Its effects.

Again, we sometimes find a part introduced to fill up the preacher's design in the text, and this is sometimes really necessary, even in the first part, but often in the last, as in Exodus xxxiii. 14.

- I. The blessings promised. This includes the whole text.
- II. The means of obtaining them.

Sometimes the preacher supplies two parts. This seems like taking too much liberty ; but Mr. Walker (no mean authority) adopts it. Acts xi. 23.

- I. Explain the exhortation.
- II. Enforce it.
- III. Offer some directions.

Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16.

- I. The character of God's people.
- II. Their blessedness.

Gen. iii. 15.

- I. Some remarks on the prophecy.
- II. Trace its accomplishment.

I consider that I should fail in my duty if I did not urge the study of this kind of discourse—so easy to be understood, so useful and pleasant in practice. Let the student make an experiment on its principles, on several passages of his own selection, by the rules laid down. There are almost innumerable passages that may be treated in this manner ; perhaps, they are more numerous in the Psalms than in any other book, particularly in the 119th Psalm. Short and pithy truths are, in general, suitable to this division, though sometimes long ones may be accomplished by it, as that on p. 2 in this volume. Now, by way of experiment, observe such instances as the following :—

Jer. xiii. 21 : "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?"

- I. State some previous facts.
- II. Institute the enquiry.

Again, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

- I. The declaration of an important fact.
- II. An exhortation founded upon it.

Deut. xxxii. 6 : "Is he not thy Father?"

- I. A fact.
- II. An inference.

Rom. viii. 13 : "If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."

- I. The end of the believer's profession—eternal life.
- II. The means by which it is secured—mortifying, &c.

Having analysed the above, you will now put into form, by way of further exercise, the following, which are on the rule, "Cause and Effect." Isa. lix. 2 : "Your iniquities have separated," &c. ; 1 John iv. 19 : "We love," &c. ; 1 Cor. xv. 33 : "Evil communications," &c. ; James i. 14, 15 : "Lust," &c. ; James i. 18 : "Of his own will," &c. ; Ps. l. 15 : An encouragement and a direction. Rom. iv. 7, 8 : The evil alluded to, and the blessedness of the remedy.

The following are on the rule : "The principle, and the consequences deducible from it." 2 Cor. v. 13—15 : "For whether we be beside ourselves," &c. ; 2 Cor. v. 11 : "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord," &c. ; Ps. xxxvi. 7 : "How excellent, &c. ; Ps. xci. 14 : "Because he hath set," &c. ; 1 Cor. vi. 20 : "You are bought with a price," etc.

LECTURE IV.

THE EXEGETICAL OR EXPOSITORY DIVISION.

It is of great importance to have clear and distinct ideas of the terms that are used by theological writers. The former of the above terms is found in the writings of our old divines, and signifies that a work or sermon is explanatory. It comes from the word *εξηγεομαι*, I explain, or, I declare. It occurs in this sense in John i. 18, and Acts x. 8. It is used very much as *διδασχειν*, to teach; so that, literally translated, it is the teaching method. The name therefore should remind you, my dear friends, that you ought to study diligently, in order that you may be able to teach, for it is a melancholy thing for a teacher to stand in need of teaching; Heb. v. 12. Sometimes a treatise or a sermon is called explicatory, from the Latin word *explicare*, to unfold; that is, to unfold the subject, or lay it open, as the ancient rolls of parchment were unfolded to be read. Sometimes works or sermons were called expository, from *exposui*, the preterperfect tense of *expono*, to lay open the subject proposed. Here, then, there is a general concurrence of idea as to the purport of this lecture, which is to recommend teaching sermons, in distinction from other kinds, which may be called preaching sermons. That these two kinds of discourse are quite distinct will appear by a reference to Matt. iv. 23: "Jesus went about all Galilee *teaching* in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." The late learned Dr. Adam Clarke insists upon this distinction, which I think to be just: and, though the teaching is not so lively as the preaching style, yet it is not less necessary.

I take this occasion to introduce to your attention Dr. Clarke's Commentary, as now re-published by Messrs. Tegg. I am fully aware of the Doctor's foibles on the one hand, and of his bold assertions on the other; but he has his excellences. His sentiments on Neh. viii. 8, are most judicious: "'So they (viz., the heads of the returned captives, of whom Ezra was chief) *read in the books, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense*, and caused them (viz., the people) to understand the reading.' The Israelites having been lately brought out of the Babylonish captivity, in which they had continued seventy years, according to the prediction of Jeremiah, xxviii. 11, 12, were not only extremely corrupt, but it appears that they had, in general, lost the knowledge of the ancient Hebrew to such a degree that when the book of the law was read they did not understand it; but certain Levites stood by and gave the sense—i. e., translated it into the Chaldee dialect; and, perhaps, the mode of preaching from a text, and the elevation of a preacher in a pulpit, had their origin here: what the matter of the preaching was we learn as above."

I. They *read in the book of the law of God—the words of God*. The doctrines thereof contain the wisdom of the Most High; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

II. They read *distinctly*. The Hebrew signifies to expand. They analysed and expounded it at large, showing the import and genuine meaning of every word.

III. They gave the *sense* (Hebrew, *to put weight to it*); showed its value and utility.

IV. They *caused them to understand the reading*. They understood; had a mutual taste and perception of the things that were *in the reading*—i. e., in the letter and spirit of the text; as Rom. ii. 18. This was the ancient method of expounding the word of God; and this mode is still necessary.

This method of instructing the people is rendered venerable by a host of able divines, who arose about the time of the Reformation, all of whom adopted it in practice, and continued it, with various degrees of refinement, till the system gave way to a more popular species of preaching, very different indeed from teaching. And, if it had not encroached too far, almost to the exclusion of teaching, I would have gone with the common sentiment in its favour. But, whenever the preaching plan supersedes the teaching, it leaves our youth and the general mass of the people in comparative ignorance of scripture. Thus preaching has nearly driven teaching out of fashion. Were Drs. Owen and Manton to revisit our world at the present moment, methinks they would, in their pious zeal, take a whip of small cords and drive us out of our pulpits. Formerly, whole sermons explained or taught the meaning of the word of God: *now* it is well if the people are favoured with but a few sentences of explanation. Now all that I mean by these observations is this: that the good old fashion should be kept up, and take its turn; not, indeed, to form ridiculous comparisons, but to induce us to keep our sober senses, and not to suffer the people to be refined out of their religion.

The advantages of teaching are many, great, and important; and no minister can fulfil his duty to Christ unless he does it after the example of Christ, and soberly teach the people what are "the first principles of Christianity." This plan of preaching would stimulate the people to think for themselves, and to read the word of God more than they do. They do not now read the holy scriptures so much as they ought, because they do not understand them. But, if they had a better insight into their beauties, their pleasure in examining them would increase; they would "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,"—in the "knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ:" by this alone can Christians become "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Nay, I appeal to common sense, whether any method can so effectually enable them "to give a reason of the hope that is in them," whether any other method can enable the heads of the families to instruct their children and servants in the "good ways of the Lord." Is it not to be feared, also, that the neglect of teaching will involve the habit of neglect in the teacher to inform himself? whereas, if he put himself upon the habit of teaching, it would oblige him to study the doctrines which are necessary to be taught: and this study would be a great benefit to himself. Besides, we have in our days many thousands of young people very laudably engaged as teachers in Sunday-schools; and, if these young people are themselves ignorant, what must their scholars be? Possibly a few out of our congregations may go hereafter into the ministry: but how are they to undergo their previous examinations without solid instruction? and if an individual present himself as a candidate for the office of a preacher, and be found shamefully deficient, what a reproach it would be to the ministry which he had attended? Referring to my own experience, I can truly say that the little ability I possessed, at my first entrance into the pulpit, I acquired, by God's blessing, under the able teaching of a certain minister, now no more as to this world. To him I owed my comprehension, such as it was, of the connected truths and doctrines of divine revelation, in which, by the same blessing, I became so fixed that I have not been moved from them.

May I be allowed to add that a people continually under a popular strain

of preaching acquire a vitiated taste, which they call a refined taste, to such a degree that they become disgusted at an instructive discourse and an instructive preacher. But, I ask will pulpit orations, however fine, or declamation, however elegant, comfort them in affliction or in death? Can any knowledge but that which is solid preserve the people from infidelity, from the vain philosophy of Socinianism, or the blandishments of the world? Surely I may answer this in the negative. You will see Paul's sentiments on the subject, Col. ii. 6—8, and Heb. xiii. 9; the last verse is, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace," where, I conceive, he means the doctrines of divine grace, or the grace that accompanies sound and saving knowledge. But, in the neglect of this, the people become an easy prey to any artful sophistical enemy of the cross of Christ.

Now I repeat to you, my friends, that I do not wish you to be always engaged in mere didactic teaching; but come to the point of sufficiency. Let "*Inter alia memento doctrinas*" be your motto; and, when you have informed the understanding of your hearers, strive, by all the consecrated arts and weapons of Christian oratory, to assail the heart, and carry the affections. This by all means you ought to do, but leave not the other undone. Then shall you be, indeed, "workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

My introduction has been rather long, because I have yielded to the ardent feelings of my mind. But I now proceed to observe that in our expository plan (for so I think we must at last call it) all the rules of the other kinds of division and discussion must be laid aside. This scheme is no borrower, it being complete in itself. In other schemes we sometimes make the text bend to our plan, but here our scheme must entirely bend to the text. Here no limitation can be permitted to a certain number of heads; nay, very often, the arrangement will appear barbarous. That skeleton will be the best, in this matter, which best lays the subject before the people; and the preacher is left to the best exercise of his genius and judgment what course to pursue. He is quite at liberty to pursue his own course, provided he keep from entanglements, embarrassments, obscurities, useless repetition, and useless divisions and subdivisions. This last caution is the more important as this kind of teaching produces a great deal of branching; and here good taste must direct. It might be expected, from the respect I have paid to antiquity, that I should furnish a standard of expository preaching from the earliest of our reformers, or their successors, the Puritans; but this task I shall decline. I propose for your imitation and practice those authors who, in later times, were expository textuarians; for these best suit my purpose: and, after presenting you with a few examples from them, I shall add some directions, calculated to afford you assistance. I hope my specimens will be found adapted to convey instruction, and a knowledge of scripture.

Doctrinal subjects, and those in which reasoning is particularly needful to establish a controverted point, are best treated in the expository method. The preacher should commence the discussion by defining the *terms* of the text, as *salvation*, *justification*, &c. If he neglect to do so, many of his hearers will remain ignorant of his meaning. Now because, as I have already hinted, examples are better than rules and precepts, I will give you some of the best character that I know of.

I commence with the outline of a discourse by Dr. Gill, which, though of course a mere abridgment, affords a good specimen of exposition. Col. i. 19: "For it pleased the Father that in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell."

I. Show what fulness of Christ is here intended.

1. There is a *personal* fulness in Christ—the fulness of the Deity, Col. i. 19. There is no perfection essential to Deity but is found in him—Eternity, Rev. i. 8; Omniscience, Matt. xviii. 20, and xxviii. 20; Immutability, Heb. xiii. 8. Though, as man and Mediator, he has a life communicated to him from the Father, yet, as God, he owes his being to none. If it were not so, he could not be equal with God, which the Jews understood him to declare, and which he neither qualified nor denied.

2. There is a *relative* fulness in Christ. This is his body, the church, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, Eph. i. 23. This was ever a fulness, in the design and purpose of God; it is a gracious fulness as saints are called in; it will be a fulness absolutely complete when the Mediator shall deliver up his kingdom to the Father, when he will say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

3. There is a fulness of *fitness* and *ability* in Christ for the due discharge of his mediatorial work, which consists in his being God and man in one Mediator. Hence he is a daysman between Jehovah and his people, able to lay his hand upon both (Job ix. 33), a merciful and faithful High Priest, &c.—As *man*, he has something to offer as a sacrifice to God for us, and was thereby capable of making satisfaction in the very nature which had sinned, which the law and justice of God seem to have required; also of conveying the blessings of grace procured by him to his own people. Hence, "He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." His purity and holiness fitted him for the office of High Priest, Advocate, and Intercessor, points on which the scriptures constantly insist, 1 John ii. 1; Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; Heb. vii. 26. Being *God* as well as *man*, there is a sufficient virtue in all his actions and sufferings to answer what they were designed for; and thus he as effectually preserves the honour of the divine character as he secures the salvation of man.

4. There is also a *communicative* fulness, which is of the Father's good pleasure and will committed to Christ to be distributed to others; and this is of large extent and considerable importance.

1.) A fulness of *nature*: he is the "head of every man," and the "head over all things to his church": he is appointed "heir of all things;" every thing even in nature is deposited in Christ for the benefit of his people.

2.) A fulness of *grace* (John i. 14, 16), whence believers receive "grace for grace." This, again, consists in, (1.) A fulness of the *Spirit of grace*, and of all the gifts of the Spirit. In Rev. v. 6, *seven* is introduced as a number of perfection (further proved from Ps. xlv. 7; John iii. 34). Hence, all the extraordinary gifts conveyed to the apostles and brethren (mentioned Acts chap. ii.) were properly the gifts of Christ. For this purpose he is said to have ascended, Eph. iv. 8. (2.) A fulness of *justifying grace*, which also is in Christ. To him it belonged to bring in an everlasting righteousness, &c. (Dan. ix. 24), satisfying the demands of law and justice, to be placed to the account of all believers. With it God is well pleased, Isa. xlii. 21; and by it his people are filled with joy, Jer. xxiii. 6. This blessing is free, extensive, substantial, and unalterable. (3.) A fulness of *pardoning grace*. The covenant of grace has largely and fully provided for the forgiveness of the sins of all believers, Heb. viii. 12. The Saviour's blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins, Matt. xxvi. 28. Hence "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, through (or according to) the riches of his grace." (4.) A fulness of *adopting grace*. This springs originally from the love of the Father, 1 John iii. 1. The enjoyment of it, however, comes from Christ; he came to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, Gal. iv. 6. (5.) A fulness of *sanctifying grace*. The abundance of sanctifying grace is in the hands of Christ; he is the sanctification of his people, as well as their righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is out of his fulness that we receive one grace as well as another, John i. 16. Part of this is received in this life, and the residue at death; so strictly will that scripture be fulfilled, Heb. xii. 14. As he is the author and finisher of their faith, so he is of their sanctification. (6.) There is a fulness of *all grace* in Christ, for *every purpose* and for *every season*. A fulness of light and life, of wisdom, strength, joy, peace, and consolation. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and from him these are given to us; though without him we can do nothing, yet by him we can do all things.

3.) And, besides the fulness of nature and grace, there is in Christ a *fulness of glory* and *eternal happiness*. The glory of his people, as well as their grace, is in him; as their life of grace, so their life of glory; as well for safety and security as for conveyance and gift. He himself will be the great similitude of their glory, Col. iii. 3. He was the purchaser of their eternal inheritance. He fits them for it; secures them in it.

Thus all the fulness of nature, grace, and glory is deposited in Christ, and flows to us through him. So much reason have we to glory in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 3.

II. Give some account of its nature and properties, particularly of the *fulness of grace*.

1. It is a very *ancient* one, for though it is said he received at his ascension a fulness of gifts, yet it only means that extraordinary effusion for that extraordinary occasion; the Father bestowed it without measure long before, for Isaiah saw his glory, chap. vi. and chap. xlv. 14. All the ancient saints drank water from the well of salvation, Isa. xii. 1, 2. Nay, this "grace was given in Christ Jesus before the world began." He was set up from everlasting for this end, Prov. viii. 23.

2. This fulness is very *rich* and very *enriching*—a fulness of truth, as well as of grace. Every page of scripture largely exemplifies this point, bringing to light this pearl of great price; and the whole constitutes an inestimable treasure, far more valuable than all the riches of India. Here are promises of grace, like apples of gold in pictures of silver. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. viii. 9.

3. This fulness is extensively *free* with respect to its spring, source, and distribution, the persons concerned in it, and the manner in which they are blessed by it. The source is the sovereign good-will and pleasure of God: no inducements on our part, either with respect to good works or naturally amiable qualities, produced this disposition on the part of God. The scripture, indeed, seems in many places to countenance such ideas, as direct promises made to holy fear, obedience, love; but these expressions merely point out the characters who enjoy them, and are exhibited as effects proceeding from divine grace as a cause. They are then purely of gift, and so declared: "Come, buy wine and milk without money," &c. Isa. lv. 1, 2; Rev. xxii. 17.

4. This fulness is *inexhaustible*, and, like himself, *unchangeable*. It is a well, a spring, a river that will ever make glad the city of God.

III. Show in what sense this fulness may be said to *dwell* in Christ.

1. The term imports that *it has an absolute being in Christ*. It is given to him—put into his hands, and hence communicated to the saints; because it is in him they receive it. It is in him, to the exclusion of every other source. We are to regard him alone as the fountain, &c. Jer. ii. 13.

2. It denotes its *continuance* there, which is the daily encouragement of the saints. They may apply in every time of need. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. As the same sun gave light to Abraham, to Paul, to ourselves, yesterday, so we know that he will give light to-morrow, and to the end of time.

3. It denotes its *safety* and *security*. It is hid with Christ in God, cannot be lost or wrested from us.

IV. Make it appear that the being and dwelling of this fulness in Christ is owing to the *good pleasure* of the Father: "It pleased the Father," &c., who is the first source of every saving benefit.

1. It is owing to the Father's *good-will to Christ*; so we read, John iii. 35; as a proof of this, he has given all things into his hands, &c. Col. i. 18.

2. It is owing to the *good-will* of the Father to *his people*. It is for their sake, and on their account.

3. Because he considered Christ as *most suitable* to be entrusted with it. Adam, who was our former federal head, betrayed his trust; it could not be committed to angels, therefore to Christ.

4. It so pleased the Father that all grace should come to us through Jesus Christ; if he would commune with us, it should be from the mercy-seat of Jesus Christ. If we have any grace, it must come from him who is the way, &c. (John xiv. 6), not only the way of access, but of conveyance also.

My second example is from 2 Cor. iv. 7: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

The text consists of two parts. We have the apostle's assertion, with the end and reason for it.

I. The apostle's assertion—"We have this treasure" (the glorious gospel of Christ, see ver. 4) "in earthen vessels." Here we must notice,

I. The properties of this treasure. It is with the utmost propriety denominated a *treasure*.

1.) On account of its worth and excellency, for what can be so valuable as the gospel of Jesus Christ?

2.) Because of its abundance; for here are infinite riches.

3.) For its truth and reality; for indeed it is a heavenly treasure, which this world cannot afford, which grace alone gives, and gives only to suitable objects: in this sense the gospel, in the parable (Matt. xiii. 44), is likened to "treasure hid in a field;" and to a "pearl of great price."

4.) It is a treasure which cannot be possessed without joy, and which we must strive to retain with caution and holy jealousy.

5.) Referring to the context (see verse 6), it may be called a treasure of light—of glory—of knowledge, &c.

6.) Consider it as to its degrees; some possess it less and some more; every real Christian is a depository of it; ministers in a greater degree, (at least it ought to be so); the apostles in the greatest degree. (1.) They possessed it in all its extent, not being ignorant of any of its mysteries, &c. (2.) In all its degrees, penetrating even to the bottom of divine mysteries, &c. (3.) In all its purity, without any mixture of error; this treasure was in them as stores in a public magazine, or as the waters of a fountain are in its basin, or reservoir.

7.) This treasure was long hid in the counsels of Jehovah; but it is now displayed in a preached gospel.

2. Consider the place of its deposit—"in earthen vessels." It is not committed to angels, for these would have been golden vessels; no, the wisdom of God did not direct this. It is in this case like Gideon's lamps of victory, which were to be placed in earthen pitchers, or like the precious law of God, which was to be placed in a wooden chest. A small quantity of the wonderful manna that fell in the wilderness was, for a memorial, to be preserved for future generations, yet to be placed in nothing better than an earthen pot. So sometimes the word of life is now put into pots very common indeed, yet the quality of the word is the same. But the apostles as well as ordinary ministers are called earthen vessels, because,

1.) The apostles were not the authors of the gospel, but only instruments appointed by God to communicate it to the world.

2.) For the meanness of their condition, 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

3.) On account of their frailties, both of body and mind. Their bodies were frail, subject to disease and death: their minds were subject to infirmities, as their history testifies; but, however mean in themselves, they were honoured by their office, and this ought to have shielded them from contempt.

II. The end and reason assigned—"that the excellency," &c. We must notice—

1. The excellency of the power here spoken of—power in a superlative degree.

1.) To effect miracles.

2.) To convert the world.

3.) To throw down all opposition, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

In other words, the excellency of the gospel consists in its complete efficiency, both to purify and save. It was powerfully accompanied with miracles; it is impressed by the Holy Spirit on the minds and hearts of men. The gospel is the wisdom of God; and by this wisdom the power is directed.

2. The design of this procedure—"that the excellency of the power might be" (that is, might fully appear to be) "of God," and not of us, "that no flesh should glory in his presence," that second causes should not usurp the place of the first—a misconception very frequently formed, but always pernicious. This is not an unnecessary precaution, as an attention to the following passages will evince: Acts iii. 10, 11, &c.; Acts xiv. 11; Acts xxviii. 6. The church of Rome has done all in its power to confer dignity on man, and it is doing all it can to retain it. In short, whenever human nature has any thing to do with the institutions of religion, and the appointments of God, she always invents something to confer honour on that which has no honour in itself, and which God will eventually overthrow. But God, in order to prevent this abuse, did in the early age of the gospel commit this treasure to such lowly characters as the apostles; he suffered them to appear "earthen vessels," as they really were, in order that their dust and ashes, their weaknesses and imperfections, might serve for a corrective or a counterpoise to the glory of such a great and admirable ministry. The weaker the instrument, the greater the power required to render it efficient. The more contemptible the rams' horns, the more honour to God

that by them he overthrew Jericho. The weaker the apostles, in themselves, the greater the superadded power that by their ministry overthrew the hierarchies of the world. Here all must own "the finger of God."

Never did the divine power appear more conspicuously than when Moses by a mere rod did all his miracles, when Jericho's walls fell at the sound of rams' horns, and when Jesus by his gospel overcame principalities and powers, when by the preaching of it, committed to the fishermen of Galilee—without friends, without money, or learning, or philosophy—idols fell, temples were demolished, oracles were struck down, the reign of the devil was abolished, the strongest inclinations of nature were turned from their course, ancient habits were changed, and the people flocked in crowds to receive the pure gospel from such earthen vessels as are mentioned in the text.

This example, which I consider completely explicative, furnishes a fine lesson for ministers of the gospel, who never appear to such great advantage as when manifesting the character of *servants* for Christ's sake, conscious of their own nothingness, sensible of their frailties, and dependent on sovereign goodness for continual supplies of heavenly treasure. The apostle has well said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5.

There is an affecting and lamentable weakness in human nature—we are always fearful of sinking in human estimation, and we imagine that some exterior embellishments are required to secure our reputation; but in the proper discharge of our duty we should commit our reputation entirely to Christ, the master whom we serve. If it is true, as a general axiom, that "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," it is especially true in reference to the work of the ministry. Christ will take special care of those whose only concern is to honour him and magnify the treasure committed to them. See the honour that posterity has put upon these poor despised apostles. The most learned panegyrics are written and spoken of them. The chisel and the pencil have vied with each other to immortalize their names. In like manner, even if we fail of being honoured here, our memory shall be blessed, which is surely reward enough. "Those that honour me I will honour; and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30.

There is one point in expository sermons to be sedulously attended to, and that is, accuracy in developing the true sense of the text. I think if there be one thing in which Mons. Claude excels, rather than in another, it is this. Indeed he has taken more pains to inculcate this point than any other on the minds of students. Perhaps a specimen of this accuracy may be given you in the place of his numerous and extended examples. I will select one instance from the second division* of his expository discourse on John i. 17: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

You must explain what grace is and what truth is. You may apply both these terms to the person of Jesus Christ, and to the manner of his conversation here upon earth; for there were two qualities perpetually diffused through all his converse—affability and sincerity, affability or sweetness expressed by grace, and integrity or sincerity, expressed by truth. Sinners are generally governed by anger and deceit, as the poet says: *Astutum gestant rabido sub pectore vultum.* They are profound, mysterious, and impenetrable; and under specious appearances they hide the most fatal designs, like those clouds which under luminous aspects conceal thunder and lightning, hail and storm. The heart of Jesus Christ was all love, peace, and benevolence towards men; and all his exterior deportment was sincerity and sweetness. But, although this be true, yet this is not the sense of the words. "Grace and truth" are here put for the gospel of Jesus Christ—grace in opposition to the rigour of

* See p. 18 of this volume.

the law, truth in opposition to prophecies, types, figures, and imperfect beginnings.

I. The gospel is called grace,

1. Because God has manifested himself to us, not with the pompous and majestic grandeur of Mount Sinai, but in a mild and gentle manner—"God manifested in the flesh," in such a manner as to quiet all alarms.

2. Because it is only a revelation of mercy, a declaration of the remission of sins, &c.

3. Because it comes to us by the pure good pleasure of God, without our having contributed any thing to it, &c.

4. Because it not only comes as an outward invitation, which reaches the ear, but also with divine efficacy, converting the soul.

5. Because the Spirit of grace does not hurry us into violent transports, but works gently upon our natural powers, enlightening our understanding, &c.

II. As to truth, such is the gospel.

1. In opposition to falsehood and errors of all kinds.

2. In opposition to the vanity of human knowledge, as Solomon testifies: "Vanity of vanities," &c.; and, as Persius exclaimed: "O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!" Hence says the prophet Isaiah (xxix. 8), "It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth," &c.

3. In opposition to prophecies, chiefly such as were of a promissory kind. The gospel is the accomplishment of these; therefore Jesus, on the cross, said, "It is finished," as he had before said—"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

I shall next offer to you the outline of Witherspoon's searching discourse on the deceitfulness of sin, from Heb. iii. 13.

I. Illustrate the deceitfulness of sin.

1. Its deceitfulness appears from its *disguising itself*, and wholly concealing its nature. Though the law is a light to discover it, yet its attempts at concealment have sometimes been successful. Hence David prays that the evil of his heart may be revealed to him, Ps. xix. 12, 13. There is a mystery in iniquity which eludes all human research, 2 Thess. ii. 7.

1.) Sometimes it hides itself in the prevalence of *loose principles*—infidel tenets under the flimsy name of *liberality of sentiment*. We call them loose principles, because, so far as they prevail, they slacken all obligations to duty, oppose the remonstrances of the gospel and the law of God, stifle the voice of conscience, and furnish a seat for scorers in which to sit and scoff at religion and its followers. Thus the eyes of the sinner are blinded, and his heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

2.) Proceed from principles to *practices*, from generals to particulars. Sinful practices are disguised. Hence intemperance is termed only encouraging a social disposition; pride is called honour; passion, dignity of mind; vain pomp is elegance and refinement; avarice is prudence; levity is cheerfulness. So deceitful is sin that a minister may preach against sin while he cherishes it in his heart and indulges it in his life. On the contrary, piety is ridiculed under the name of fanaticism; a tender conscience is called narrow-mindedness; zeal is moroseness. In short, the prophet's account, Isa. v. 20, is completely verified.

3.) But the deceitfulness of sin is most affectingly exemplified *when it assumes the garb of piety*, 2 Cor. xi. 14. A man may imagine that he is doing God service when he is the child of the devil, and the persecutor of saints, John xvi. 2.

2. The deceitfulness of sin further appears from its *forming excuses for itself*, or extenuating its guilt. How early in life is this acquired! How early was it practised! Gen. iii. 13.

1.) One excuse is, the *commonness* of the evil; it is the practice of the multitude.

2.) Others plead that their sin is comparatively *venial*. Even upon a dying bed, some people console themselves with this refuge of lies.

3.) Others institute a comparison between their good deeds and their bad ones, and so garble the account as to make the balance in their favour. Thus it is often contended that he who has more virtues than faults is a good man. Self-righteousness stands upon this foundation: "I am not as other men," Luke xviii. 11.

4.) There are persons to be found who will plead *original sin* in extenuation, actual sin being only the necessary effect of it. Sinners look upon themselves as devoid of blame—as those who receive a disease from others, and no more criminal. So did not David, Ps. li. 5. It ought to increase our lamentation, but not to diminish our estimation of its guilt.

5.) Some will even take refuge in the doctrine of *predestination*. Fate so determines

things;* but God cannot, in the remotest manner, be chargeable with man's sin, James i. 13. All these excuses only aggravate sin, and serve to harden the heart against repentance.

3. The deceitful nature of sin is apparent from its leading men insensibly from *one degree of wickedness to a higher*, so that they are by this means hardened, which they would not be all at once. If Satan were to exhibit the whole of sin, in all its deformities and consequences, it would startle the sinner: sin is discovered by degrees. Even Hazeel once abhorred cruelty, 2 Kings viii. 13. Let us, therefore, notice some of these steps or gradations in sin.

1.) Little sins, as they are called, are indulged, as Lot said of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" But a small leak will sink a large ship.

2.) After a time these little sins appear less still, and the deluded victim ventures further; there is something desirable in such a bait, and this is swallowed also. So sin is added to sin.

3.) Sinful company is kept and delighted in; and thus evil communication corrupts good manners.

4.) The next stage is confirmed habit in sin; and (Jer. xiii. 23) habits become rooted; every act of intemperance, of sensual pleasure, of sinful indulgence, gives new strength to sin.

5.) The sinner next loses a sense of shame, that strong guard which the God of nature has placed within us, Jer. vi. 15; Isa. v. 18.

6.) Then the remonstrances of conscience are silenced, Eph. iv. 19.

7.) The next step is to boast of sin; Phil. iii. 18, 19.

8.) At length the sinner becomes an *enticer* to sin, an active agent of Satan, and in this resembles him.

II. The exhortation to duty, founded on the deceitful nature and hardening influence of sin: "Exhort one another daily." Observe,

1. The persons to whose lot this falls. Christians in general, not ministers only: "Exhort one another."

2. The season: "Daily," while life lasts, Eccles. ix. 10.

3. The manner. It must be done as becometh Christians, not upon bare suspicion, not when the offender is in an ill state to receive exhortation; in no case when the exhortation would exasperate, Prov. ix. 7; Matt. vii. 6.

1.) It should be made to appear, as much as possible, to flow from love to the offender, as its principle.

2.) It should be conducted with meekness, Gal. vi. 1.

3.) With zeal and earnestness, in order to show the sense you have of the fault complained of.

4.) Lead the sinner to consider the cause of all sin, of which that complained of is only a part.

5.) It must be accompanied by circumspection in your own conduct, Luke vi. 41, 42.

III. Make some practical observations.

1. Hence we see the great corruption of our nature.

2. Young persons should beware of the beginning of sin.

3. Let hardened sinners consider this solemn scripture, Prov. i. 24—31.

Walker also delineates the progress of sin, in his sermon on Eccles. viii. 11. Its *nature* is delineated by Owen on Indwelling Sin; and by Jamieson, in his Sermon on the Heart.

The following brief specimens of expository discourses will serve as a praxis for your improvement.

Archbishop Tillotson, vol. i. p. 569, folio edition, on Matt. v. 48: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

I. Consider how we are to conceive of the divine perfections.

II. Lay down some rules by which we govern and rectify our opinions concerning these attributes and affections.

III. How far we are to imitate these perfections; as per context.

IV. Show the true meaning of this perfection.

V. Conclude with suitable inferences.

* It is well known that thieves and other profligate characters often speak of *fate* as bringing them to this condition of profligacy.

Take, also, a division of Ralph Erskine, vol. i. p. 169, on Isa. xlii. 6.

- I. Offer some remarks concerning the covenant in general.*
- II. Show how Christ is the covenant, and in what respects he is so.
- III. Enquire for whose benefit he is so.
- IV. By whose authority he acts.
- V. Offer some reasons for the doctrine.
- VI. Draw some inferences.

Psalm li. 11 : "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Enquire,

- I. What particular influences of the Holy Spirit are here meant.
- II. In what degree these may be lost.
- III. The causes of this partial loss.
- IV. The particular reasons for solicitude on this subject.
- V. The course to be pursued for recovery.

Many of Mr. Simeon's sermons are of the teaching kind ; and, although his division is modern, much of his filling up is ancient. His ninth and thirteenth skeletons are of the expository kind, though without naming any division whatever.

An immense number of examples, in which passages are laid out in logical order, are to be found in Burkitt on the New Testament, and more especially in Henry, and these may often be turned to good account. Some ministers are very cautious of using any of these plans, because the volumes of Burkitt and Henry are possessed by many families ; but surely some new casting might easily be devised that would give the air of novelty, and please the fastidious, if they be thought worth the pleasing. However, in some edifying manner, a whole parable or miracle, a relation of facts, or a short psalm, might be thus explained. This method is very much revived by evangelical ministers of the establishment ; and, from the great numbers that attend their ministry, it is evidently acceptable. As to a short psalm, the following is an example from Henry on the first psalm :—

- I. Here is a description of a godly man.
 1. To avoid evil, he utterly renounces evil doers, Ps. cxix. 115.
 - 1.) He does not walk in their counsels, but shuns their principles.
 - 2.) He stands not in the way of sinners, Ps. xxxvi. 4.
 - 3.) He sits not in the seat of the scornful, Ps. lxi. 12 ; Hos. vii. 5.
 2. He submits himself to the guidance of the word of God, Ps. xvii. 4.
 - 1.) His delight is in it, Rom. vii. 16—22.
 - 2.) He meditates in it, Ps. cxix. 97.
 3. He is declared blessed, in upper and nether-spring mercies.
 4. By all these means he becomes fruitful as a tree by the waters, &c.
- II. The sad contrast in the character of the wicked.
 1. Their state is the very reverse. "The ungodly are not so," &c.
 2. Observe their doom.
 - 1.) They shall not stand in the day of trial.
 - 2.) They shall be utterly cut off.

This is a very excellent outline ; but, if it be desirable to give a new cast to the discourse, the following outline may serve for want of a better as a specimen for such a cast. I do not wish to draw you from your independent study and the resources of your own minds ; but, if at any time you feel indisposed towards mental labour, or time will not allow you to enter on it,

* It is of the utmost consequence for every preacher to know well the nature of the two covenants—viz., of the Law and the Gospel. He may consult Boston's Fourfold State, and the Covenant of Grace ; also Witsius, or even Buck's Theological Dictionary. [See especially the Congregational Lecture on "The Covenants," by the Rev. John Kelly.]

regard it as perfectly lawful to avail yourself of the materials furnished by such an author as Henry.

This Psalm is generally viewed as a beautiful preface to the whole book of Psalms. The subject of it very much resembles what is found in Jer. xvii. 5—8; but this Psalm comprises a more ample description—a perfect picture of the two great classes of mankind—the righteous and the wicked, which are to receive their respective sentences at the last day. The manner of representation is by contrast (so usual in scripture),

I. Of their characters. Observe,

1. The character of the righteous.

1.) His judgment is correct.

(1.) He has a clear sense of honour and dishonour, Gen. xlix. 6; Ps. cxix. 115 (text, ver. 1).

(2.) He perceives the excellency of truth and obeys its dictates, Phil. i. 10 (text, ver. 2).

2.) His affections are correct also, and follow his judgment. Hence his delight in the word of truth, which is manifested.

(1.) By reading it with devout attention, Ps. cxix. 97; Ps. xvii. 4; Rom. vii. 22.

(2.) By making it the subject of incessant meditation.

3.) His whole character resembles a tree by the water-course, exhibiting both beauty and utility, Jer. xvii. 8; Phil. iv. 8.

2. The sad contrast, in the character of the wicked man. He exemplifies a climax of wickedness; for *nemo repente fit turpissimus*.

1.) He walks in the counsel of the ungodly, or associates with the wicked and acts on their principles.

2.) He stands in the way of sinners, or watches opportunities to unite in their projects, which is bolder still, Ps. xxvi. 4.

3.) He sits in the seat of the scornful, or treats godliness with contempt, Hos. vii. 5. Thus verifying the sentence, 2 Tim. iii. 13. He waxes worse and worse.*

II. In the cognizance which God takes of both.

1. The Lord knows, with approbation, the way of the righteous. He shall stand in the judgment, “when God appeareth,” and in the congregation of the righteous for ever.

2. But the wicked man shall be “like the chaff which the wind driveth away,” and shall eternally perish.

Here is difference enough from Mr. Henry in appearance; and yet, in point of fact, there is none. The most manifest difference is in transferring some things that are negatively expressed of the godly to the character of the wicked in a positive sense. This is taking a licence, but I hope none of the spirit of the Psalm is thereby lost.

As to Burkitt, he is full of both long and short skeletons, that is, skeletons upon long and short passages, which a little pains would so modernize that when our knowing people saw their old friend with a new face they certainly would not recognize him again. This is, I suppose, what we wish, when we find ourselves out of condition for close study, or have not time for it. It is necessary to obtain a knowledge of Burkitt's key-words, his *Observe*, his *Note*, his *Learn*. When he says *Observe*, he is about to give you a head or division of the passage in an expository view. Here, then, you will generally find afterwards, *Observe* 2ndly, and 3rdly, &c. See on Col. i. 28: “Whom we preach,” &c.

I. Observe what was the principal subject of Paul's preaching. It was Christ: “Whom we preach.”

II. Observe the manner of Paul's preaching: “Warning every man,” &c.

* This retrograde character is excellently drawn by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, quoted by Mr. Simeon: “Vice is first pleasing; then easy; then delightful; then frequent; then habitual; then confirmed; then the man is impenitent; then he is obstinate; then he resolves never to repent; and, finally, he is damned.”

- III. Observe the end of his preaching : "That we may present," &c.
- IV. Observe his indefatigable diligence and labour : "Striving," &c.
- V. Observe the gracious helps and blessed encouragements he experienced, the "mighty working" of the Spirit with him.

Having laid out his subject in the above manner, which is purely expository, Mr. Burkitt proceeds thus :—

I. Learn, hence, what was the sum of Paul's preaching, and ought to be the sum of ours—to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ, to promote their advancement in knowledge and obedience.

II. Learn that faithful ministers of Christ judge no labour too great that they may attain these ends.

III. Learn that such ministers, so labouring, may expect divine assistance ; Christ will strive with them.

IV. Learn that, when ministers meet with success, they are to ascribe such success to the divine hand alone.

This double laying out of this and a thousand other of his passages perplexed me at the first : but it occurred to me that it was no more than the manner of preaching which obtained in earlier times, and which was first to expound the text and divide its parts, and afterwards to subdivide it into propositions, which gave more scope or latitude to the preacher. For here he drew the subjects deducible from the text, to be expatiated on from other sources besides the text.

Here, then, you see what Burkitt means by his Observe and his Learn, and you are at liberty to take which course you please, whether exposition or proposition. Frequently, however, he lays down but one plan ; sometimes the former, and sometimes the latter. Now, if you were disposed to take his expository plan to preach on, you might briefly employ his propositions as inferences, &c. ; and, if you adopt his propositional plan, you must take the substance of his exposition into your exordium. His propositions are generally expressed in too many words : this must be avoided.

That you may study Burkitt with as much advantage as possible, it will also be necessary to pay particular attention to his key-word Note. He uses it in very indefinite senses, and for various purposes. Sometimes as a reflection, such as the passage suggests, or as an observation ; and sometimes the same as his propositions, as on Col. iii. 4 ; so that here you must judge by circumstances.

Now, instead of adopting Burkitt's divisions on Col. i. 28, 29, let us see whether we cannot avail ourselves of the hints which they suggest, and throw the whole into a new form. We may entitle the discourse "A Description of the Gospel Ministry." This is described,

I. In its detail or constituent parts.

1. As to its subject, or principal subject : "Whom we preach."

2. As to the manner of preaching : "Warning, teaching," &c.

3. As to the end and design : "That we may present," &c.

II. In its difficulties : "Wherein I labour, striving"—

1. As a labourer in the Lord's vineyard, 1 Cor. xv. 10.

2. As one that strives for mastery, viz., agonizes (see 2 Cor. vi., &c., as a proof even to death.

III. In its encouragements and success : "According to his working who worketh in me mightily," 1 Thess. i. 5 ; Rom. i. 16 ; Isa. lv. 10, 11.

This scheme is in effect the same as Burkitt's, but differently arranged. His first three parts are here assigned to one general head, which they will very well bear ; and the whole is brought to three general particulars, with their subdivisions. I cannot think there is any difficulty in effecting an

alteration of this or any of a similar kind; and, if there be, a little practice will smooth the way. Should such a metamorphosis be thought allowable, we may possess ourselves of an inexhaustible fund for sermons, even beyond what is requisite.

In consulting Henry and Burkitt, you may pretty safely rely upon their logical correctness, as far as this is available; but many parts of scripture will not yield to these regulations, and every attempt must be futile as to certain parts.*

Other expositors and commentators on the scriptures will help you in your expository discourses, though perhaps in a different manner, or in a less degree. Brown and Scott will help you to parallels. Brown on the epistles, and Scott on the whole body of scripture, will assist you in reference to the meaning of the sacred text: so will Dodd, Poole, Gill, &c. But, whatever help you may derive from such sources, it would be folly to expect that you could succeed in expository preaching without an extensive knowledge of the scriptures, of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and of the wants of your people, with respect to these, that you may "fill up that which is lacking" in them, contriving in your expositions, as well as in the choice of texts, to suit their various wants and experiences.

You will probably possess some of the works of our puritan authors, of the nonconformist divines of England, and such as immediately followed them, or some of the Scottish ministers, as Ralph Erskine and others. They will give you much assistance in your expository discourses. You will find in them great depth of thought, much casuistic divinity, and elaborate discussion. The people that heard these men were probably some of the best-informed Christians since the apostles' time. The points pursued by these ministers were exposition, illustration, and solid proofs. In application they were very extensive. They often appropriated an entire sermon to this purpose: they gave what they called uses of *information, examination, exhortation, reproof, encouragement*, and many other heads. Sometimes, previously to the exposition, they would invite their audience to follow them into certain prior considerations, to clear the way to the text. One of them favoured the people with sixty or seventy previous considerations, and then said he was about to open the text! Thus, with all their excellences, they had great faults; they were too much addicted to the silly logic of their times; they shredded their text into the greatest possible number of parts, and sometimes ran out into great lengths of reasoning. It will be your task to avail yourself of their excellences without copying their faults. A great number of our best sermons, both in print and manuscript, owe their chief value to a judicious selection of their most pointed and excellent thoughts. An acute eye, a quick and sound judgment, will easily accomplish this task. Many who are extolled as original preachers, and men of genius, have obtained much of their reputation by modernizing our old authors.

Above all, think deeply for yourselves. Exercise your reason and your judgment. Compare your thoughts with the word of God. Attend to the workings or operations of your own minds. Enquire in what view a text or passage proves serviceable to yourselves; and while you very properly

* The elaborate attempts that were made in the seventeenth century to reduce the scriptures to logical order did, in a great measure, fail; and so it ever must be; for they were not written with a view to such conformity.

cherish a humble spirit, and seek to obtain information, forget not the following weighty thoughts, for which we are indebted to the late Dr. Bogue: "A minister of inferior talents, who labours to improve them by study, exercise, and prayer, will far surpass one of much superior gifts, who allows them to languish for want of culture."—"Perhaps there is not a man who knows the extent of his gifts, nor to what extent they might have been cultivated by diligent application and suitable methods of improvement, nor to what eminence in usefulness he might have attained; while sloth and misdirected application are the ruin of many."

THE DISTRIBUTIVE DIVISION.

I shall allow this species of division to rest upon its own merits: it needs no apology or defence, and its authority is sufficiently established. It is distinctly pointed out by Mons. Claude. Only it must be remarked that what I call the distributive division he calls the division of different respects or different views. This variation, however, signifies little.—"This course," he says, "is not properly a division of a text into parts, but rather establishing a different application of the same text to divers subjects. Typical texts should be divided thus, and a great number of passages in the Psalms, which relate, not only to David, but also to Jesus Christ. Such should be considered first literally, as they relate to David, and then in their mystical sense, as they refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. There are also typical passages which, besides their literal senses, have figurative meanings, relating not only to Jesus Christ, but also to the Church in general, and to every believer in particular, or which have different degrees of their mystical accomplishment." I may add that numerous passages in the prophets are of the same description.

A few examples will sufficiently illustrate the value of this species of division, which affords some scope for the exercise of ingenuity and good sense. I begin with Claude's example on Dan. ix. 7: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day." M. Claude considers this a very proper subject for a fast-day. It must not, he says, be divided into parts, but considered distributively,

I. In regard to all men in general.—"God has never left himself without a witness" of his righteousness and his goodness. "All men have sinned," and it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Here is a copious theme of discourse. Then,

II. The text had a very particular application to Daniel's time. It was the day of Jacob's trouble, but now he was to be saved out of it. Daniel confesses that all the calamities which his nation suffered were the righteous visitations of an offended God: yet he very properly *propitiates* the divine mercy upon the ground of recorded prophecies and promises; and hence he gathers his hopes of restoration, for which, as a true patriot, he humbly sues.

III. The text is applicable to our own times; for the Lord mixes judgments and mercies together in his present dispensations. According to the view we take of things, there is as much to call forth intercessions and humiliations as there was in Daniel's time.

IV. The text is too frequently applicable to us as individuals. "When God deals with us by terrible things in righteousness," and when we can clearly read our sins in our afflictions, then humiliation and repentance should accompany our pleadings for restoring grace.

Take an instance from Saurin on Luke xxiii. 29: "Behold, the days come," &c. Consider the calamities of the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem,

I. As a proof of the truth of scripture prophecy, which often foretold their dispersion.

II. As a ratification of the execration denounced on themselves: "His blood be upon us and on our children."

III. As a seal which God has put upon Christ's mission,

IV. As an instructive lesson to us. Rom. xi. 22.

Take also the following from Mr. Simeon on John xvii. 22 : "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." The author makes his division to turn upon the different views in which this glory may be contemplated. He observes,

I. It is the glory of manifesting the divine power.

II. The glory of displaying the moral perfections of the Deity,

III. The glory of being the sons of God.

IV. The glory of being united to God.

V. The glory of reigning with God.

I add one example from Henry's Exposition of Jonah ii. 10. The enlargement of Jonah may be considered,

I. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures.

II. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent who in his distress cried to him.

III. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection, Matt. xii. 40, &c.

These outlines all appear to be conducted on the general principle of the association of ideas, and general resemblances. They please because they excite an operation of the mind which is perfectly natural to it, and in which it delights to employ itself.

This method of discussion may, I think, be frequently adopted with advantage when it is thought desirable to make the discourse bear on any particular circumstance or occasion, in which case the reference to such circumstance or occasion should be reserved for the last part of the discourse, as, for instance, in the quotation from Claude, on Dan. ix. 7. It is clear that such last part, to which the others are in a manner only introductory, will receive the largest share of the preacher's attention, and that it will be a kind of application of the text. When this is the case I do not see the necessity of a separate peroration ; but in such a case as that referred to in Mr. Simeon's skeleton, John xvii. 22, the matter is quite different ; for all the parts of the discourse are of equal importance, and the first four are not introductory to the last. In this case, therefore, there must be a separate peroration agreeing with the whole subject. Mr. Simeon's peroration is expressive of adoring wonder, love, and gratitude, and of our obligation to love and serve him who so loved us. Than this I do not know what could be more suitable and appropriate.

It must be obvious that this kind of division opens a way for fanciful coincidences, against which both Mr. Robinson and Mr. Simeon give just cautions. Fancies, in a book of light poetry, may be endured ; and perhaps the title of the book may lead us to expect something of the kind, or probably the name of the author, who may often have amused the public with his strains of wit and humour. But of all places in the world the pulpit is the most unsuitable for introducing fancies. It is a very sad thing to transfuse our erroneous, ill-judged, crude notions into the minds of those who come to be taught "the truth as it is in Jesus," and "to hear words whereby they may be saved." But just views of things, the words of truth and soberness, have a deserved immortality in them. There is nothing that is solid, either in the eastern or western fathers, which does not continue in as high esteem as ever ; and the solid divinity of the reformation, though in a form little suited to our taste, as well as the works of a succeeding age or two, stand as high as ever in the estimation of the wise and the good. It is

not their high names that have preserved current the writings of these men of God, though their names are precious ; but it is their clear conceptions, their energetic expressions—always consistent, always harmonious—resembling those beautiful trees planted on each side of the crystal river of God, adapted at once for ornament and for the spiritual health of nations. Rev. xxii.*

What a blessing to the world are the men who conceive clearly, who prove powerfully, and who manifest in every sermon that they are adapted to form “a wise and understanding people !” In the great care which we think it necessary to adopt in order to restrain fanciful uses of Old Testament passages, we should however guard against laying down a rule that is too strict ; namely, that of “encouraging no spiritual or mystical sense of the Old Testament which has not the sanction of the New.” There are some persons who, indeed, ought not to be trusted beyond this line ; yet I think a temperate, judicious, and prudent preacher may occasionally venture a little beyond the strict letter of such a rule, for it must be allowed that this is not a scripture rule.†

LECTURE V.

THE REGULAR DIVISION.

It is almost dangerous to call any thing regular ; for a nice eye will, in most cases, discover some irregularity.

“Who’e’ desires a perfect piece to see,
Seeks what ne’er was, nor is, nor e’er will be.”—WALLER.

If, however, we can make the method of division understood which we call *regular*, and give examples tolerably well corresponding to the design, we may be pardoned, though we fall short of perfection. In all the works of man, the hand of man may be traced : perfection is to be found only in the works of God.

We must borrow our ideas of regularity from analogy. Thus, a triangle is so when its three sides are equal : a circle is regular when its circumference is every where equally distant from the centre : these are mathematical regularities. In matters of taste, that is just or regular which the general consent of mankind has made to be so. Thus an epic poem is judged regular when it has a proper beginning, a middle part, and an end ; and, though its nominal parts exceed the number mentioned, yet the supernumerary ones are to be considered as reliefs, and for the purpose of introducing some incidental characters and circumstances which are supposed to heighten the interest of the work, while that which sustains the reputation of the piece is its unity, or conformity to such three constituent parts. Allow me further to illustrate my idea of regularity from perfect or regular paintings. Attend to the cartoons of Raphael ;‡ there you see all is life and beauty. Every where the great apostle of the Gentiles is the most prominent figure—the

* For an account of our reformers, see Bickersteth, c. xi. lect. 3, or 2d ed. p. 232.

† [This whole subject of Typology is best exhibited in its principles and details, in the very able, learned, and satisfactory work on “Typology” by Dr. Fairbairn. The principles are even more accurately stated at the close of “Typical Forms and Special Ends in Creation” by Dr. M’Cosh.]

‡ Now at Hampton Court.

persons who were affected by his miracles or discourses next—then the more subordinate characters and circumstances—the whole combined with the most skilful display of light and shade ; in every thing we see a completeness, and a whole that leaves nothing in the mind unsatisfied.

You find regularity also in the works of God. In the account given of the creation, first we see the grand architect arrayed in the majesty of power. Secondly, we behold his work ; every where he commands, pervades, and effects the purposes of his will. Thirdly, we see the end, the perfect work. The “heavens rejoice, the earth is glad.” “The morning stars sing together.” The perfect paradisiacal state is established ; till, unhappily, sin

“Brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

The day also has its morning, its blazing noon, and peaceful evening. The spring, the summer, and the autumn, give the same pleasing idea. In each of these latter instances you perceive a rise, a progress, and an end. If you transfer your thoughts to scripture records, or history, the same beauties meet your eye. The history of Joseph has this perfection. View this wonderful character for the first time telling his portentous dreams to his aged father. He is the “hero of the piece,” or the character corresponding with what is so called ; and here is the first part of the sacred drama. The second commences with his sufferings and trials. The third is his elevation above all the subjects of Egypt—the splendour of his wisdom in the preservation of his famishing family. You will observe how inimitably one circumstance rises out of another, producing a certain effect, and contributing its part to the whole ; how admirably all the incidents (as they are called) are introduced ; and how important every one of them is in its place ; so that, while they are but incidents, the very least of them could not be spared ; but with them all is complete. Now, I say, that the common consent of all mankind marks this a regular piece. It is introduced without any pompous announcement—and Moses does not even tell you that he is about to introduce you to a wonderful history, or congratulate himself when it is finished. But, as to this history, we must certainly look through Joseph to Joseph’s God. HE was the sovereign director, whose purpose was “to save much people alive.” Gen. i. 20.

The history of Moses himself bears the stamp of the same character of unity ; but with one defect : he did not locate Israel in the land of promise ; this was effected by a substitute. But here there is a beauty which a thousand times compensates for the want of perfect unity ; the substitute was Joshua, the type of our blessed Lord, even of HIM who accomplished the great work of our redemption. He was the Sun of Righteousness that arose at Bethlehem, gave life and vigour to all his own gracious designs, and then rested gloriously at the right hand of God ; and HE is the proper theme of all our preaching and all our praises.

Now I can come to no other conclusion, from all these premises, than that an action which prefers the best claim to perfection has these constituent parts ; and that a sermon which carries the impress of these parts has the best claim to be called regular. It must, however, be remembered that its merely having three parts does not constitute the sermon regular. This consists in its unity. It is the regular idea that is formed in the mind by the uniformity of all its parts which makes it so. Many sermons which consist of three parts may have various degrees of approximation to the perfect plan, and yet they must be refused this honour, though they might

have been reduced to a regular form had the author so willed it, according to the rules of this Lecture.

In order to constitute a sermon regular, the agent, or that which stands in the place of the agent, being the first part, must be seen actuating or contributing its influence in the second; and whatsoever is thus acted, said, or done, must have a rational tendency to the third part, and must bring the whole to its point or issue, which must be of corresponding importance to the subject, and must agree with the agent and action. It must appear that the first and second could come to no other point; and our conviction must be complete that the exhibition is just, or as near to perfection as possible. Mr. Foster, in his *Observations on Robert Hall as a preacher*, says: "Such should be the train of thinking that it may preserve a link of connexion by the dependence of the following thought on the foregoing, that succeeding thought not only being just in itself and pertinent to the matter in hand, but being so still more especially in virtue of resulting by obvious deduction, or necessary continuation, from the preceding, thus at once giving and receiving force by the connexion." Happy is the preacher whose text and genius bear him through such a design, when the matter throughout is worthy of the outline, when truth and beauty go hand in hand to secure success! Happier still if the Holy Spirit breathe life into his discourse, and if this great agent apply the word to the heart! And this must be always borne in mind, that, however beautiful the form of a sermon may be, yet it is the Spirit alone that can put breath into it; and this observation is the more needful to those who submit to elaborate study in composition; for, by the common infirmity of our nature, we are too often inclined to expect efficacy from our correct compositions, more than untaught preachers ever do; and if, after all our labours, we do not succeed as we expected, we conclude that there has been some fault of this kind with us, when perhaps the great fault is, forgetting that "our sufficiency is of God," that "it is God that gives the increase," and that "he will not give his glory to another."

I now proceed to furnish some examples of the regular kind of division,—to show that several others, though irregular, may easily be reduced to this class,—and then add some directions and cautions.

The following is my first example, in an outline of a discourse on Jer. li. 10: "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God."

If I intended to preach from this passage, I should first enquire, What is the principal subject of the text? It must be indicated in the words "*our righteousness*;" this is the *subject* spoken of. This righteousness is the *righteousness of the Jewish cause*, which was vindicated by Jehovah when he brought the Jews from the Babylonish captivity.

Having ascertained the literal or primary application of the term, I should state my intention to adopt a more general and evangelical application; and enter this head (marked I.) in my written outline. I should then proceed to enquire, What is affirmed, denied, or related, of the principal subject? It is asserted that "the Lord hath *brought forth* our righteousness," *i.e.*, has given publicity to those interesting transactions and circumstances which comprise the church's glory—he has *himself* done it, to give more certain effect to the publication throughout the world, and to the most distant ages, Ps. xl. 9, 10, and xeviii. 1, 2, &c. This forms the second part

(marked II.), on which I might observe that the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity was an object of attention to all the surrounding nations—never before equalled, except in the redemption out of Egypt. In many respects the return from the captivity had the greater glory of the two, being attended by circumstances of peace and good will, instead of terror and vengeance on the enemy, being equally effected by divine interposition, equally acknowledged by the world at large as such (Ps. cxxvi. 2), and equally an accomplishment of specific prophecies and promises. Giving liberty to these captives without price or reward (Isa. xlv. 13) was unparalleled in the history of the world, and not to be accounted for upon any principles of state policy.

But, in an evangelical sense, we have still brighter glories to unfold. Jehovah "brought forth our righteousness" when he raised Christ from the dead, Rom. i. 4; iv. 25; Acts x. 40. On the great day of his ascension, Ps. xxiv.; Eph. iv. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 18; Phil. ii. 9. The demonstration of this glory was publicly made on the day of Pentecost, by miraculous gifts, by converting grace, and justifying righteousness. From that time Jehovah's righteousness shone forth like the sun in his meridian strength. Glorious as these displays are, *they* shall be lost in more glorious manifestations, when the whole earth shall be filled with divine glory, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, Isa. xxx. 26. But a display still *more* transcendently majestic shall succeed that of the latter-day glory, in the general assembling of the church at Christ's right hand, when he shall ascend the throne of his ineffable glory at the last day. There every intelligent being, whether a vessel of vengeance or of mercy, shall own the righteousness that shall then be displayed, in the most momentous decision that ever the court of heaven itself pronounced.

Having discussed the first and second general heads, I should next endeavour to discover the most striking circumstances connected with the act referred to under the second head. This act was the *publication* of Israel's righteousness. What was produced by this publication? The answer is, *Joy and Gratitude*. Here, then, we have the third head of discourse—viz., the joy and gratitude which the manifestation of Israel's righteousness excited in the persons interested; or (more briefly expressed) *The joy and gratitude produced*. "Come, let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God."

There is something singularly proper in the *place* selected for the expression of this joy. To a gracious soul, Zion is the fit place for praise, Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14. Praise is the best of our actions, and the most fit place should be selected for its celebration, the place that God has chosen for all our most holy exercises, and to which, on Sabbath days especially, we ought to resort.

There is also something beautiful and seasonable in the *exclamation itself*. Full concurrence with the divine purpose is manifested by the determination expressed to join in the publication of Israel's righteousness. The Lord had no sooner spoken the word but a great company appeared to promote, in their humble degree, the glory of his name (Ps. lxxviii. 11), not unlike those angelic beings who wait around the throne of God, ready in a moment to repair to any part of his dominions to do his will, Ps. ciii. 20, 21. It is a presage for good when men appear anxious to go forth to publish the everlasting gospel, and when personal benefits have this practical effect.

By this mode of discussion the strength of the discourse is required in the intermediate part; or, if I may adopt a different figure, it is on this the light should be principally cast, as upon the most prominent object in a painting. But there are some texts and subjects which cannot be discussed by this rule, and for which no particular rules can be given. There are also numerous texts that may be more commodiously arranged than by subject, attribute, &c., and which stand recommended by a pleasing novelty, which gives full scope for ingenuity. By the adoption of these, the attention of the people, upon which so much depends, will be preserved, and a profitable variety supplied.

Still, however, in this outline, we find a trifling unfitness for the regular order. Jehovah, the agent, does not appear as the first part, but only in connexion with the subject of the text—OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; so that in the first part we have a subject instead of an agent; but, though this is an irregularity, yet it is immaterial, as it has no bad influence upon the unity of the discourse: and I shall very soon show that a subject, or state of things, will answer the same end as an agent. But, had the great agent of the text formed the first part, then we should have expatiated upon the character of Jehovah singly, and from this have passed to the main action. But here the agent and action are incorporated or connected in the second part, though without any injury to the outline; for you will observe that the second part opens with the display of JEHOVAH'S LOVINGKINDNESS towards his church in bringing forth or manifesting its righteousness. Then, in the third part, the action terminates in the effect produced—viz, gratitude and praise, the strongest points upon which any subject can rest. Here we see in a moment the connexion of the first part with the second, and of both these with the third, so as to preserve the requisite unity in the discourse.

Mons. Claude says: "There are texts which contain the end and the means, the cause and the effect, the principle and its consequence: in these cases it signifies little on which you begin, as 2 Tim. ii. 10: 'Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.'"

I. The sufferings of the apostle.

II. The end he proposes; and

III. The principle from which his action proceeds.

Nothing is wanting in this and several other cases to change the accommodational into the regular division but a transposition of the order. Mons. Claude's division possesses the three parts essential to our regular division, and by merely transposing them, which I hope is pardonable, they will appear thus:—

I. The sufferings of the apostle:—"I endure all things."

II. The principle that actuated him to bear them—his love.

III. The end which he proposed to himself—their salvation, &c.

Here we have a subject for the first part, and not the apostle himself in *propria persona*. The case is somewhat like the preceding example, and admits of the same apology. The apostle's sufferings were identified with himself and his work, which opens to the preacher a large field of observation, and makes a very excellent first part. Now there must be something which carried him through his difficulties and enabled him to surmount them, which it is necessary for us to know, in order to enable us to account for his history, and to show how he became an example to us and to all succeeding ages. This is supplied by the second part: his love was the moving

principle. He suffered these things for the love he bore to the elect (the words of the text), the love of Christ and his redeemed people, and his general philanthropy. This was not only a strong, a sufficient principle, but it was the only principle which the gospel would recognize. Some men may perhaps have endured as much from motives of ambition and the love of fame; but these principles will not bear to be brought to the balance of the sanctuary; and I fervently pray that we all may keep in memory this circumstance. Let it animate us under our difficulties till we have left nothing undone that we can do, and until each of us can say, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course." No principle can be more noble, more elevated, more pure; it is entirely divested of selfishness, that bane of human actions. In Christ himself this excellency was conspicuously displayed; and it has in all ages been the inheritance of the true church, and the surest token of identity with it. Thirdly, the outline points out the expressed object upon which the apostle's labours rested, and in which they terminated—the salvation of the church through Jesus Christ, with eternal glory. How noble and disinterested! and how different from those whose end is gain or worldly distinction!

The next instance of a regular division, wrongly placed, will be found in the same author, and is on Phil. ii. 13: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He says: "I think the division would not be proper if we were to treat, 1. of God's *good pleasure*; 2. of his *grace*; and, 3. Of the will and works of men. I should rather speak of the willing and doing which effectual grace produces in us; then of the grace itself; and lastly, of the source of this grace." Now, by changing a word to suit the present purpose, viz. "operation" instead of "effects" we have the following outline:—

I. The declaration of God's grace respecting men:—"God worketh in you."

II. The operation of this grace towards the Philippians in willing and doing. This comprises the whole of the Spirit's work.

III. That into which the whole resolves itself—the good pleasure of God. As the sovereign first cause, and last end, it is meet and right that all should be done "to the praise and glory of his grace." "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

You will perceive the alteration that is necessary to constitute the division regular. In the first part I should insist on the preciousness of that grace which so seasonably displayed itself in performing what human nature, in its most improved forms, and under the most distinguished advantages of mere philosophic culture, never could effect, and which even the law of Moses could not complete; 1. Cor. i. 21; Rom. i., ii., iii., and viii. 3. But the term used by Claude, viz., "effects" obliges us to speak of the operation of this grace, as well as of the grace itself, which could only be properly considered in the second part, along with willing and doing. His arrangement was quite contrary to his own rule in the very next page, which is, "never to introduce anything into the first part which belongs to the second." Having treated of the first, it would be proper to go on to the second, wherein the whole plan and province of the divine influences must be exhibited and insisted on, but yet in connexion with means, as in ver. 12. Now this is the action of the sermon, and sermons will be good or bad as this part is, or is not, judiciously handled. Then I should treat of the "good pleasure" of God as the third part, into which the above gracious conduct resolves itself, as the "spring and source of this operation."

Take also another regular division. Col. i. 13 : "Who hath delivered us." &c.

- I. The divine agent in this blessed change.
- II. The development of this change.
- III. The divine design therein.

The next instance of the regular kind of division is on Matt. iv. 19—20.

- I. The person or character of Jesus, who calls his people.
- II. The call itself.
- III. Its end or design.

The first part presents us with a fine and copious opportunity of speaking of the person or character of Jesus, according to his appointed names, Saviour and Immanuel (Matt. i. 21, 23), and his authority and offices as Mediator, to commence, increase, and establish his church ; for this most aptly introduces the second part. The second part will admit a reference to the doctrine of the divine calling, or some allusion to it, passing from species to genus (the first topic), and distinguishing between the outward and the inward call. Then, thirdly, the end or design, which is "to gather into one the people of God that are scattered abroad," bringing them into a church state, some for pastors, or, as intimated in the text, for the work of the ministry, and others for filling up the general body. You may observe that this end is worthy of the Redeemer ; it corresponds with his great love to men, which ought to draw forth our supreme love to him, make us listen to his call, and immediately obey it.

The nature of the regular division has been pretty fully opened ; but there are certain practical points to be attended to, without which it would, in some cases, be difficult for the student to acquit himself well. The examples I have given are founded upon selected texts, such as are peculiarly favourable to unity ; but it must be obvious that it will be very difficult to prosecute this plan with other texts that are not alike favourable for such a purpose, and in some cases impossible. For instance, Ps. xxvii. 8 : "When thou saidst, Seek you my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Now this is a very beautiful passage, a sacred dialogue : and upon the accommodational plan, we have,

- I. A gracious call ; and,
- II. A suitable answer.

But, if we were to put ourselves upon the task of framing a regular division upon it, we should attempt an impossibility. Here is no leading idea that could be set down for the first part, no action connected with it on which to form a second, nor anything that leads to a certain end for the third. Such a division, if attempted, would be forced and unnatural, and hence this plan should not be tried upon what we call unbending texts.

But, that you may not too hastily determine that a text is of the unbending kind, because you find some difficulties attending its discussion on a particular plan, I shall venture to offer you some directions by which you will frequently be able to remove such apparent difficulties in the construction of this order of public discourse ; for there are many texts which will really take this form, but which at first sight seem unyielding to our wishes. That you may better understand my meaning in this instance, I observe that, if the parts do not appear obviously on the face of the text, this non-appearance may be owing to several causes, and the following hints are worthy of your attention.

First, the parts may not be evident, owing to the peculiar order in which

the words are placed in the text. The order in which the words of the text are arranged probably follows the original, most likely the Greek text, and is not that which we call the natural order, or that manner of placing words which is followed in English, and which the usage of our language requires. As for instance, "Him hath God exalted," instead of, "God hath exalted him;" "These things understood not his disciples at the first," instead of, "His disciples did not understand these things at the first." Now it is by no means foreign to our purpose, though it may detain us a little, to consider what this natural order is. Observe the sentence, as restored to the natural order, just named, from Acts v. 31. God is the Agent, and therefore the natural order requires that the Divine Being should in this sentence be placed first. Then that which is done: "God hath exalted," &c. Then the person on whom this exaltation rests: "God hath exalted him." So with regard to the other sentence, John xii. 16: "His disciples did not understand these things at the first." Here everything said relates to the disciples; therefore the natural order requires precedency in favour of the disciples. They did not understand. Then comes what they did not understand, viz., "these things," with the limitation—"at the first." The Greek language admitted extraordinary latitude in the arrangement of words in a sentence, and it is not surprising that our translators should sometimes have followed the order of the original more than is compatible with the genius of our tongue. It may therefore be owing to an inverted order of words that the three parts of a text do not at first sight appear; and even the meaning of a passage may be rendered obscure by it. This, I submit, is the case with our translation of Heb. x. 10: "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Now this to an English eye, is a very extraordinary manner of placing words, and is calculated to perplex us; but if we restore the words to their natural order, all will be clear. The offering of the body of Jesus Christ once (viz., once made or effected) sanctifies us by the will of God; or, the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, which took place according to the divine will or appointment, effects our sanctification. Here by the alteration proposed, we at once have the meaning of the apostle, and the parts for division, and these parts will be as follow:—

- I. The subject of the text, which is clearly our sanctification.
- II. The means, or operating cause—the offering of Christ once and effectually made, not like legal sacrifices, which were often repeated.
- III. That in which the preceding terminates, viz., the will of God, and by which our entrance into heaven is appointed.

The introduction of the redeemed into glory is by means of atonement and sanctification; but sanctification in the text takes the lead, because that is the subject on which the apostle is treating, and the atonement made by the death of Christ is the means whereby this sanctification is secured.

If this regulation be followed, I see no need of Mons. Claude's "two natural orders," though what he says carries with it some plausibility upon his own system.

Secondly, Cases of difficulty may occur in fixing upon that which is properly the first part of the regular division; indeed the chief difficulty lies in this; and, as a mistake in this particular throws everything into confusion, for the assistance of junior students, whose interests are in these Lectures particularly consulted, I venture to submit the following friendly directions to their consideration:—

Should a *person* or *character* not appear, examine whether the text does not present you with a *governing subject*, or *state of things*. 1. A Subject, as that referred to in Heb. x. 10. 2. A state of things, as "The state of self-deceiving Christians." This will constitute a first regular division as well as a person or character acting; just as a state of things may form the nominative case to a verb as well as a person. Thus we say in common discourse "It is cold;" that is, we are in that state which we denominate cold. In short, whatever it be that has an agency, or stands in the place of an agent, must take the lead, or be the first part; but, if there be nothing that leads to an action in that which is put for the first part, then there will be an evident irregularity. For instance, suppose I was to say, in respect to Phil. ii. 13., that the subject of the text was "God's working in us to will and to do." Here I take possession of that for my first which is truly my second; but if I only take possession of God's declared purpose, then all is right; and it further appears by this, that, if I were to treat the text by way of proposition, the purpose of God must constitute my first proposition.

But should the difficulty still press, and the first part not clearly appear, let the student write out the text at length on waste paper, placing the lines at some distance; then with his pen let him draw a single line under the word or words which are attributes, or acting words, or which express affirmation or denial, or the verbs and participles, and the little words that belong to them, sometimes called particles: such are always the second part. The intention of this will soon appear. After this operation, draw two lines under the word or words, with their attached particles, which express the end or design of the action, which receive the force of those words that have one line under them, and which follow the action, as in grammar the objective case follows the active verb and receives its force.

When these two things are done, if the text will admit the regular form, then the remaining words, or the principal of them, which have no line under them are the *material* for the first part.

To make the matter still plainer, suppose the above-mentioned text to be under consideration, my diagram is this:—

"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

By this rule I have drawn a single line under the words "worketh in you both to will and to do;" for these words indicate the action. By the same rule I have drawn double lines under "his good pleasure;" for the words of the second part resolve themselves into "his good pleasure" as the third part. Upon examination you perceive there are no words left which are not underlined but "it is God." God is therefore the agent, and constitutes my first part, as discovered by this operation. By this method I think the student will at any time discover in five minutes one of these two things—either that the text will not bend to this form of discourse, or that the parts of the regular plan of division are before him, and thus prevent much error in his skeleton and confusion in filling it up.

I acknowledge that in this scheme I am establishing no claim to superior penetration: it is what any novice might lay down; though, so far as I am aware, it never has been done. Probably our great masters in preaching have thought it beneath them, and their inferiors have had too much modesty to take up the elucidation of the subject.

Thirdly, You will sometimes observe, in looking for an agent of which to

form the first part, that, instead of the agent, you find his representative, as he, him, it, who, or whom, etc., a personal or relative pronoun. In this case you must of course look back into the context to see of whom the inspired penman is speaking, or to whom such representative belongs; and being satisfied on this head, that is, that you have found the right one, you may assume it as your first part, and set it down accordingly. Suppose the text to be Col. i. 19: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." This Him is Christ, mentioned in the preceding verse. Then we have,

I. The person spoken of,—viz., CHRIST,—which is to be the first part or head of discourse; he whose magnificence and dignity are displayed from the fifteenth verse.

II. The thing asserted, viz., that "all fulness dwells in him."

III. The reference which this has to the Father, and his good pleasure therein:—"It hath pleased the Father."

Great care must, however, be taken in this matter; for the real antecedent to the pronoun is often disputable, though in the above instance this cannot be the case. Unless, therefore, it be, as in the present case, quite clear, the point must not be decided on without an expositor or a judicious friend. There is a remarkable case in the verse immediately following the above text, where the word "himself" does not refer to Christ, though he was the last person referred to; but the "himself" is the Father, though spoken of as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth verses. And these difficulties are chiefly found in the writings of the apostle Paul. Wherever you find a representative word in a text, and can make sure of the character to whom it belongs, adopt it without scruple, whether it be a he or a him, a who or a whom, or even an it, if it refer to the chief subject of your text.

Fourthly, Two things are of paramount importance in reference to the second regular part:—

I. It must be something which the preacher clearly sees he can make sufficiently edifying to the people to render it worthy of occupying this important station. A first part may sometimes be only transiently considered; and sometimes the last or third head of discourse, though vastly important, may yet be short; but to adopt a second with scantiness of matter, or with a poverty of thought upon it is exceedingly injudicious.

II. We must examine well the qualities of the second branch of our subject, as to what it consists of. For instance:—

1. Is it anything said to be done, obtained, or required, together with its various circumstances? or,

2. Does it conduce or lead to any point or final rest? or is it a means towards an end? Then it is excellent according as the end is indispensable; for whatever leads to, or conduces towards, a great end, must be worthy of an honourable station in a discourse; nor can it be said that such matter is trivial or unimportant.

3. Is it any thing that affects our present or future state? In these views is it injurious, or remedial, or helpful, or restorative?

4. Is it any thing that determines, or governs, or counteracts our conduct, as a principle of action or inaction; it must be very important to discuss such points well.

5. Is it persuasive to, or dissuasive from, doing a thing, either commanded or forbidden us of God, as Rev. iii. 17? If this can constitute a thing important, what an immense number of scriptures have we of this class!

These things require the most attentive consideration, and call for all the

light and evidence which can be collected together, and all your resources must be brought into requisition to render such a second part worthy of an impressive third; for as I have already said, and it cannot be too often repeated, the sermon will be good or bad just as this part is good or defective.

Fifthly, It may sometimes happen that a text gives you very excellent first and second parts, but no third. Now, in this case, you may supply a third from some following idea after the text, which is very easy to come at; and sometimes you may make a third, though it be not expressed, agreeably to the principle upon which the preceeding part was founded, as Topic 12; or as a ground and cause, exemplified in Topic 19: as, for instance, suppose we were desirous of making some of Mr. Simeon's two-part sermons into three. Where this expedient would constitute them regular, it may be done. Nothing is easier than to effect the design on Rev. iii. 17, 18.

I. The state of self-deceiving Christians.

II. The advice which our Lord gives them.

III. The principle upon which this counsel is given; namely, Christ's love to them.

The very next verse justifies and furnishes this: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." And, in fact, this principle of love gives a very striking effect, and is the sweetest characteristic of the favour which the Redeemer bears to us. In short, this supplementary part may be some sound scripture object, such as the glory of God, the ultimate end or general design of sovereign goodness, or the evident obligations which the persons addressed are laid under, or whatever is well calculated to produce a happy effect, and to render the discourse complete.

Sixthly, Where two things offer for a third part, you must use your discretion which of them to admit. Matt. iv. 19, 20.

I. The person who calls; namely Jesus.

II. The call itself:—"Follow me."

III. The promise annexed to their compliance, that he would make them honoured instruments in setting up his kingdom in the world.

The regular discourse comprehends what authors in general denominate "Sermons of unity." Great advantage will be derived from an attentive perusal of the forty-second Lecture of Dr. Blair in relation to the proper ideas of unity. This forty-second lecture follows the track of most critics, but is perhaps more useful than others from its brevity and plainness. The criticisms of Addison, in the *Spectator*, are excellent, but very elaborate, and therefore less pleasing. Few people derive pleasure from seeing a man at hard labour; but, on the contrary, when we see a great work achieved with ease it delights us exceedingly. Yet, after all, surely these great critics might have told us that all the beauties of unity may be exhibited in prose as well as in verse; and to demonstrate this they might have adduced the story of Joseph, which is as perfectly epic as any to be found; for verse does not make poetry, nor does prose exclude it. Poetry is in the thought itself, and not the language, though the thought may influence the language, or it may not, as to any species of composition to the exclusion of others. Its three parts constitute one whole; the three parts are only what the mind conceives as belonging to the whole. They are not three but one, as the body, the soul, and the spirit constitute but one man, 1 Thess. v. 23. And the proper effect of this unity is some specific conviction or impression on the mind, effected by the justness of the argument, to which the unity tends, corresponding with what is called the moral of an epic poem.

The universal sentiment of all mankind has pronounced in favour of this orderly construction of a piece. Hence the more eminent of this kind of works have obtained for their respective authors perpetual praise. The most talented men have regarded it as their highest honour to translate these jewels of literature into modern languages; and the standard of true taste is acquired through them. Our own experience confirms all this as to a sermon. Compare the different effects produced by an irregular and a regular discourse. One is loose and desultory: the preacher takes you from Dan to Beersheba, calls your attention to this thing on your right, and then to another thing on your left; but all to no point or just conclusion: while the preacher who better understands his business leads you in a strait way, wherein your imagination and judgment cannot stumble. There is a plain setting out, a consistent course, and he brings you to a profitable point; and you naturally ask him to lead you another time. This kind of discourse is, nevertheless, not to be hackneyed too much; the old adage again, *Ne quid nimis!* rather learn to transfuse the essence of this rare plan of composition into all your species of sermons, though you are not to adopt universally the form; and this will give acceptableness to all your discourses.

In conclusion, whatever be your form, keep the end in view. Whatever be the number of your parts, associate them well as to kinds. Let one thing connect and agree with another thing; and, as far as possible, let them be dependent and consecutive, always reserving the strongest point for the last.

LECTURE VI.

THE INTERROGATIVE DIVISION.

THE acquisition of knowledge by the human mind is gradual and laborious. Unlike those purely intellectual beings, whom we may suppose to grasp with one intuitive perception all the bearings, and properties, and uses of the subjects to which they direct their attention, man is obliged to investigate things in a circuitous and circumstantial manner; and one principal means by which facts are ascertained, and truth is elicited, is that of asking questions (or interrogation). We enquire of our ancestors respecting the information they possessed and the opinions entertained in their day (Deut. xxxii. 7), and we ask our contemporaries what information they can impart, what new light they can throw upon the path of science.

The importance of this method, and the success with which it has been attended, have given rise to a regular set of questions, by which the enquirer is directed to those points of his subject which require examination. To the intelligent preacher, who has almost as many subjects to investigate as the lawyer, the proper use of interrogation will afford considerable assistance. Experience has proved that it may be rendered a most useful auxiliary in producing, or entirely sustaining, division; and that it is adapted to help us out of many a difficulty.

The questions are as follows:—Who? What? Where? By what means? For whom? How? When? Why? Now, if we examine

* See Manton, vol. iv., p. 285, Part I.; and Beveridge, vol. ix., p. 118, wholly interrogative.

carefully, we shall find in these questions the chief circumstances of an action brought to view, or the points of a command laid open to discussion.

1. Who? Here is the actor. Who has done or spoken such or such a thing? 2. What has he done or said? 3. Where did the action take place? or, Where were the words spoken? 4. By what means was the action done? or, By whose authority was the thing said? 5. For whom or what is the act done? Was it done for his own personal benefit, or for the honour and advantage of another? 6. How was the act done, or how were the words spoken—openly or privately? Was it done partially or effectually? In what temper and frame of mind, &c.? 7. When was the thing done or said?*

Of these things I shall have further occasion to speak. In examining a passage selected for discussion, on the principle of interrogation, it may be a surprise to some to find that the questions propounded often produce the same result in many particulars as some paragraphs of our last Lectures. Among other things, they point out the agent, the manner of acting, and the object to which the action tends. Consequently, if this method pleases best, as to constructing the regular discourse, the other may be dismissed; or in cases of difficulty both may be tried; or one may prove the other, just as two methods of computation are frequently employed where great accuracy is required. But the interrogations have this further recommendation, that they very frequently point out the parts of other species of division, especially the expository.

It will also be seen that the questions are near akin to some of the topics, and will answer in their stead. In short, there are many texts which it would be difficult to analyse without having recourse to the interrogatory method. Scarcely any text, it is true, will answer to all the questions; but the end is obtained so soon as you know how many of them can be found; and no doubt some points of discussion, which were of sufficient consequence to have had a place, are lost for want of an application of the questions to them.

We may further observe that the interrogative method almost necessarily leads to the argumentative style of preaching, or that popular line of address by which Blair and many others have gained very high rank. Everywhere Blair seems to be discussing questions, though concealed ones; indeed this is the key to his writings. It must be owned that he had great skill in placing his paragraphs in the best order to answer his purpose in the discourse he was handling, every thing tending to one point, and thus contributing to the unity and strength of his subject.

If we pay attention to good writers and eloquent speakers, we shall perceive that they make very frequent use of interrogations, especially in argument, in perpetual application, in all kinds of comment, and as a form of division. Look only on the pages of our great authors, and you will see scores of interrogations. When an author or preacher is conscious of truth, he appeals by way of interrogation. If he is contending against any error, or any improper character or conduct, he illustrates the folly and wickedness by putting strong, unanswerable questions. "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, how will you contend with the horsemen?" Instances are so abundant and striking that there is no need to point them out; however, that no part may be left without illustration,

* We have an example of this mode of arrangement in Cicero, in his Defence of Cælius, who was accused of poisoning his friend. Cicero doubts the relation. How was the design laid? How did they get the poison? whence came it? by whose assistance? to whom or where was it delivered? &c.

I refer to Burder, vol. v., p. 98; Farquhar, p. 115; Davies, vol. ii., p. 175. Scripture examples of its use are without number: "What shall we then say to these things?" "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall separate us?" "What profit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?"

Interrogation will often introduce a subject, when we should otherwise experience some difficulty. In some cases it is extremely well calculated to excite and secure the attention of the audience.

Lavington, vol. i., p. 320, on Phil. ii. 1, "If there be any consolation in Christ," &c., commences thus:—"Did the apostle doubt it? Was it a disputable matter with Paul, who had obtained such singular mercy? Did he who had been caught up into the third heaven, and had tasted of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, put the question as if it were doubtful whether there be any consolation in Christ or not? Impossible!" This is certainly a striking exordium, if delivered with corresponding tone and manner.

Walker, also, vol. ii., p. 159, on 1 John v. 11: "And this is the record," &c. "Why do not all to whom these good tidings are published receive them with gratitude and joy? Are they expressed in terms so dark and ambiguous that their meaning and import cannot be fully ascertained? Or is the offer of *life* loaded with such hard conditions as to exceed the powers of those to whom it is addressed? Were either of these true, it would furnish something more than a *plausible* argument for excuse."

I must also cite Robinson's Village Sermons, on Col. ii. 8, 9: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy," &c. He says: "What! is it possible to spoil a Christian? Certainly it is. What! is it possible to spoil whole societies of Christians? Certainly it is. And through philosophy too! What has philosophy done to excite suspicion?"

It is no wonder that Sterne should so often avail himself of this mode of commencing a discourse; for instance, on 2 Kings xx. 15: "What have they (the ambassadors) seen?" &c. "And where was the harm, you will say, in all this?"

Use may be made of interrogation to enquire respecting a matter of fact. As by the Jews respecting the man who had been born blind to whom Christ gave sight (John ix). Is this he that was born blind, and that now sees? To this a satisfactory answer is given. Where is he that has done this miracle? Who is he? How did he perform the miracle? What sayest thou of this worker of miracles? The questions, separately, were put to the young man and to the parents. Again, they repeat the same questions, determined, if possible, to find some discrepancy in the evidence; but they found none, and were confounded. But, if this account had not been true, the method taken would have discovered the deception. Truth will bear the light; falsehood will not.

The questions may also be employed in reference to the nature or quality of an action, or the degree of culpability attaching to it. Take the instance of Jonathan incurring his father's displeasure by tasting a little honey. 1. What is this that is done? Tasting honey. Is this the flagrant disobedience of a reasonable law or not? It was very indiscreet in Saul to make such a law against necessary refreshment; for, instead of retarding the progress of victory, refreshment to the fainting men was likely to accele-

rate it : besides, it could not be culpable in Jonathan, for he knew nothing of the restraint his father had imposed. If a crime at all, it must be a small one ; Jonathan did but touch the honey with his lips from the top of his spear, and that when fainting and ready to die. 2. Who is this that has done the act ? It is *Jonathan*, he that exhibited such feats of arms, and by whose means a great victory was obtained, when none could have been expected ; here, then, still less ought Jonathan to die. He was also the king's dear son, his eldest son, the heir apparent ; then compassion and policy might well spare Jonathan. But we must be careful never to extenuate what God has declared to be sinful.

Again, these questions may be put to set forth the aggravations of an offence, as that of Ahithophel against David. Who is this ingrate ? David's select counsellor. It was, says David, my own familiar friend, who did eat at my table, Ps. xli. 9, and lv. 12—14. And what is it that Ahithophel counselled ? To fall upon the king by surprise ; to slay his rightful prince. When would he do it ? That very night. By what means would he do it ? He would take David's own select guards. For what end would he do this ? To set upon the throne a traitor, a companion of his guilt.

Further, they may be used to compare conflicting testimonies, to discover who is the most deserving of credit and belief ; as those for and against the resurrection of Christ. The examination of conflicting evidence requires great skill, in adapting and modifying the interrogatories so as to elicit the whole truth and lead falsehood to contradict itself.

Sometimes the preacher may put himself in the place of his hearers, and use the interrogatories so as to make a strong appeal to their consciences. Suppose the subject to be the means of grace, he might say : "Do I diligently attend to these means of grace ? Do I watch my heart in them ? Do I exercise my graces in the use of them ? Do I profit and grow in grace by them ? Do I prize them ? Am I thankful for them ? Do I ask myself, when I return from them, In what manner did I attend upon them ? Do I walk from day to day, between one ordinance and another, circumspectly, suitably, holily, as becomes one that lives under such helps as Providence so plentifully vouchsafes to me ? Is it not by divine Providence that I enjoy these means of grace, when others want them ? Can I give up my account with comfort, for God's providence to me in this, if I am not better with them than they are without them ?"—See *Doolittle*, p. 57, folio edition. A use like this may occasionally be very profitable. It is a method of teaching others by examining ourselves.

I add that there is a kind of *negative interrogative*, if I may use such a phrase ; as in Lavington, vol. i., p. 323. "I shall ask none but such as are really the disciples of Christ whether there be any consolation in Christ or not. *I ask not* you *scribes* and *Pharisees* ; your consolations are in washing cups and basins. *I ask not* you *sinner*s, who are slaves to your passions, whose God is your belly, who glory in your shame, and who mind earthly things, whether there be any consolation in Christ ; for you are incapable of enjoying the happiness which religion imparts."

However extensive the use of interrogations, my present object will be merely to illustrate how they may be employed in assisting us to discover the parts of which a text consists, and, as occasion serves, be used in form as divisions on the text.

You will "observe with me," as Dr. Hawker says, that as respects division, authors and preachers have two methods of making use of these

interrogations—perhaps I may say three. First, in plain words: that is, the interrogative form strictly retained, as Jay, on Matt. vi. 33: “Seek you first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

I. What are we to seek?

II. How are we to seek?

III. Why are we to seek? or, For what reasons are we thus to seek?

The main argument is prosecuted under the last head, and consists in an appeal to the reason or conscience of the persons addressed. There are very strong and cogent reasons why this seeking should be commenced. You see in a moment that we have here the second question, What? The sixth, How? and the eighth, Why? and these were sufficient for Mr. Jay's purpose. The text would indeed have answered to the first, Who is the speaker? and, by implication, it would also have answered to the fourth; but it was not necessary to say all that might be said; and Mr. Jay, no doubt, introduced all that was proper. Indeed, his exordium did so introduce the person of the speaker, without making it a head of discourse, the occasional propriety of which I have before pointed out. Now the above plan, for the sake of variety, and using it before a plain congregation, is certainly both profitable and agreeable.

Mr. Simeon uses the questions in the undisguised form in his discourse on Ps. x. 13, “Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?”

I. In what respect do the wicked condemn God?

II. Wherefore do they so?

This would make an excellent subject for an assize sermon in the parish church of a county town; and for a searching subject in general, where the preacher thinks it requisite. “In what respects?” is the sixth question, How? only varied in words. The “Wherefore” is the same as the eighth, Why?

The same author, on Heb. ii. 3: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

I. What is the salvation here spoken of? (the second question.)

II. Who are those that neglect it? (the first question.)

III. How shall those escape that do neglect it? (the sixth question.)

In each of these latter instances we have an interrogative text and an interrogative division; and the last is a truly close sermon, calculated to awaken the careless—a duty which ministers should never neglect, for they themselves ought ever to have sounding in their ears the divine word addressed in the first instance to the prophet Ezekiel, chap. iii. 17, 18: “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.” Duly pressed by solemn warning, and sweetly invited by the language of Jesus in the gospel, we may hope for good effects.

We select from the same author, on Gal. vi. 9: “Be not weary in well doing,” &c.

I. When may we be said to be weary in well doing? (the seventh question.)

II. Why should we not be thus weary? (the eighth question.)

Students are not to be weary of study; ministers must not be weary of

preaching ; for in these cases the reward is either lost, or reduced by a dreadful discount.

The same author, on 1 Peter iv. 1 : "Let those that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

- I. What are the things Christians must expect to suffer ?
- II. Why is it the will of God that we should suffer ?
- III. How should we conduct ourselves when so called to suffer ?

Here we have the second, the eighth, and the sixth questions ; and most excellently do these interrogations draw forth every thing that is needful. I formerly remarked that the questions often answered the same end as the topics. You will, as you review the present examples, trace these associations. As, for instance, the first general head of this example comes to the same point as the fifth topic : viz., "Things supposed." It is that they will suffer—

1. In their reputation.
2. In their property (if they have any).
3. In their liberty. This has often been verified, though now, we thank God, we "sit under our own vine and our own fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid."

The second general head is, "Why is it the will of God that we should suffer ?" Now this corresponds exactly with the nineteenth topic : "Examine the grounds and causes of an action or expression, and show the truth and equity of it." You observe how excellently facts are decided by this question, or by the topic. God permits it. God is pleased to permit it—

1. For the trial of our faith.
2. For the advancement of our graces.
3. For the manifestation of his own glory.

The same author, on John xv. 15 : "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth ; but I have called you friends : for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

- I. In what light does Christ regard his followers ?
- II. What evidence have we that he does so regard us ?

To these there might have been added a third, as,

III. What are the most acceptable proofs that we may lay claim to the title or appellation of Christ's friends ?

I do not quite approve of Mr. Simeon's first part ; for the text settles the point without the question, and it would equally have answered his purpose to have said : "How does it appear that the condition of Christ's followers differs from that of a servant ?" Answer : "The Jewish fathers were under the yoke, the bondage of the law ; they were servants ; and, though many things were told them by Moses, yet these were only some things : but the maturity of the divine dispensations brought the Lord's people nearer in privileges ; one, in particular, was to hear such declarations of gospel purposes as must fill us with comfort ; and the other, that these very declarations are tokens of friendship of the most exalted and durable character."

The same on Heb. iv. 9 : "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The division of this discourse is very simple, and, like several others quoted in this lecture, is on the accommodational plan :—

- I. Who are the people of God ?
- II. What is the rest which remains for them ?

He illustrates the first head in a manner somewhat singular: viz., by the three members or clauses of another text, and that is Phil. iii. 3.

1. They worship God in the spirit.
2. They rejoice in Jesus Christ.
3. They have no confidence in the flesh.

The same on John xvii. 9, 10: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; and all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."

- I. For whom does our Lord intercede?
- II. Why does he intercede for these in particular?

If it were allowable to insert the *now* into the second clause, making it to read, "I pray not *now* for the world," the text would not seem at variance with Luke xxiii. 34: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Matt. v. 44: "And pray for those that despitefully use you," &c.; and the reference to the twenty-first verse, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," would have been more obvious. Dr. Doddridge, one of our soundest critics, seems inclined to some relaxation: "I pray not *thus* for the world." I am sorry that Dr. Whitby's notes on the passage are too long for insertion here. The temper and judgment here manifested are alike conspicuous; and I own I cannot reject his reasoning, viz., that our Lord did not design utterly to discard the world. See Whitby, in loco, vol. i., p. 501.*

The same on Joel iii. 13: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe."

- I. What is it that makes us ripe for the great harvest?
- II. What are the evidences of our being ripe?
- III. What shall be done when we are ripe?

This is a truly useful and excellent sermon; and, like the two following, it varies from our preceding examples by making the second question, "What?" the key to the whole discourse.

Lavington, vol. 1., p. 368, on Job v. 26: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age; like as a shock of corn cometh in his season."

- I. In what does ripeness or fitness consist?
- II. In what respects, or on what account, is such an old age desirable?

Idem, vol. i., p. 22: "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when you think not."

- I. What is the Son of Man coming for?
- II. What must we be and do in order to be ready for his coming?
- III. What occasion is there to be in such a hurry about it? †

I think these eleven examples are quite sufficient as to the ordinary use of the questions. I also hope that Mr. Simeon's name will justify me in selecting so many from him. Let it be remembered that he wrote for the use of students; and his having given so many skeletons in the interrogatory form proves his opinion of the form itself. He thought that he could not render a greater service to the rising ministry than by reviving and reforming an ancient method of instruction, and throwing the weight of his authority in favour of every thing of a plain nature, against the more splendid and fascinating specimens of the modern school.

* [He prayed that his disciples might be one. This would be an evil for the world. But he did not exclude the world from his benevolent desire. See his prayer in ver. 21, where he asks that they might believe with his disciples, ver. 8. Compare also vers. 23 and 25.]

† See Manton, vol iv., p. 918.

As the Interrogative Division is so important, I shall, in addition to the preceding rules and examples, offer a few examples in which the questions are *concealed* under other forms of expression, which may sometimes appear more elegant, while they certainly serve to introduce an agreeable variety. We have an instance of this kind in Jay, on Hos. viii. 12 : "I have written to him the great things of my law," &c. Mr. Jay takes occasion to refer to the scriptures generally, and remarks that the language of the text exhibits—

- I. Their author.
- II. Their subject.
- III. Their reception.

Now these are the answers to the first, second, and fifth* questions, though, thus expressed, the questions do not appear. The concealment, however, is very slight ; for we have only to place the interrogative term before the first word of each head, and add the mark of interrogation after the last, and the kind of division stands confessed.†

Again : Simeon on Eph. ii. 4—7 : "But God, who is rich in mercy." Here mercy is the subject. View it,

- I. In its source (the second question).
- II. In its operations (the fourth).
- III. In its end (the fifth, as before considered).

Also, Burder on John vii. 46 : "Never man spoke like this man." The truth of this testimony is apparent—

- I. As to the matter of Christ's speaking (the second question).
- II. As to the manner (the fourth).
- III. As to the effect (the fifth).

The commanding thought or leading doctrine of a text, which must always be the same in your discourse, whatever method of division you adopt, may be ascertained by applying the questions to it. This commanding thought is the pivot upon which the whole must turn. Sometimes it forms the title or head-line, as of a printed discourse. In the example just given, you at once perceive this dependence. The division on Hos. viii. 12, turns on the hinge of revealed truths. That on Eph. ii. 4—7, turns on the divine mercy. That on John vii. 46, on the excellency of Christ's preaching.

But, as this is a very important article, I must trouble you with some additional instances, which I might select from a variety of authors of celebrity ; but I prefer confining myself to Mr. Simeon, because he is my leader in the work of assisting young ministers in their pulpit exercises, and by his labours in this department he has acquired for himself a tribute of praise, and secured the gratitude of many hundreds of clergymen in the establishment, and of a goodly number of dissenters.

If you are desirous of excelling in the popular style, having fixed upon a suitable text for this purpose, first ask yourself this important question : "What is the subject of this text?" Think much and closely upon this point. If the text will answer the question What? What is the subject? &c., here one point is gained. Next try such subject upon the other questions, and the answer to some one or more of them will give a division agreeing to such subject. The subject of a text may be applied in at least

* I am obliged to extend the aim of the fifth question, and place it to intimate the object or end to which any course of things tends, corresponding in some measure with the third head of the regular division ; and this observation must serve for any future case of a similar kind.

† The elliptical method (of which this is an instance) prevails very generally among our modern preachers in forming their heads of discourse, and I think with good reason.

three distinct forms :—1. As it furnishes propositions. To this service the subject was appropriated for more than one hundred years. These propositions, were, however, treated in a very lax manner by the majority of those that used them, though an infinity of good things have fallen into our hands by them, and we are thankful. “The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places : we have a goodly heritage.” 2. The subject, as well as a person, may form the first principal head in the regular division, as per recent lecture. 3. To suit the case in hand, to divide upon in an easy and popular way, without the strict formalities of the above two kinds.

Take, for example, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, to which I have before referred, more than once or twice, because my reference to it answers so many purposes, differing in their nature and design. The words of this text I quote, that you may have an immediate and full view of them : “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean ; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them.” Now, what is the subject or paramount doctrine of this text ? Surely it is *sanctification* in its extended sense, under the influence of the great agent, the Holy Ghost, who applies the work of redemption to the hearts of the faithful. Admitting this to be a correct view of the subject, here ask yourself this question, “What does this sanctification effect for the sinner ?” Mr. Simeon furnishes the answer as follows :—

- I. It cleanses from sin (see the twenty-fifth verse).
- II. It renews the heart (see the twenty-sixth verse).
- III. It purifies the life (see the twenty-seventh verse).

This is very neat ; and I do think that without the interrogative operation the plan would not have been so well executed. A common explanatory division certainly might have been made without any rules of art ; but, to say the least, here is a change of form that carries its own recommendation with it.

When this course is taken, you must carefully apprise the audience, just before you announce your division, of what you denominate your subject. This is giving them the key to your design. As, in the present instance, you would say, “The subject of my text is the doctrine of sanctification, and it will be my business to show you what is to be expected from it. I. It cleanses from sin,” &c. Or you would say : “Considering the various figurative expressions of my text to denote the important doctrine of our sanctification, I shall endeavour to show you,” etc. But, without some preliminary observation of this kind, this plan will not be proper ; for you would bring the people into the subject by an unpleasant and unnatural jerk, which is quite an unnecessary way of beginning your services. But as one example is, perhaps, not sufficient in this important matter, I shall here give two or three others. Thus Mr. Simeon, on Lev. xvi. 21, 22 : “And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness : and the goat shall bear upon him all their sins into a land not inhabited.”

Q. 1. What is the subject treated of, or the doctrine taught, in this text ? A. We

have in it a type of Christ's bearing the iniquities of all true believers and confessing penitents.

Q. 2. What are the resemblances between the type and the antitype? A. They correspond.

- I. In their objects.
- II. In their operations.
- III. In their effects.

Here it would be proper, before naming your divisions, to make some such remark as the following: "As this text is evidently typical of Christ's bearing the iniquities of true Christians and confessing penitents, I shall point out to you the existing resemblances, etc.," *ut supra*.

Again: Mr. Simeon, on Dan. ix. 24: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy," etc.

This is an exhibition or prediction of future events and transactions. Hence,

Q. 1. What is here pointed out? A. The ends of Messiah's advent.

Q. 2. How may these be represented in accordance with the text? A. By nearly following the order of the words: as,

- I. To effect a wonderful reconciliation betwixt heaven and earth.
- II. To fulfil the holy scriptures.
- III. To prepare for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The same author, on Ps. xvi. 8—11: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Q. 1. To whom do these words refer? A. (to be supplied.)

Q. 2. What do the words express in general terms? A. (to be supplied.)

Q. 3. In what particulars does this confidence appear? A. (to be filled up in its divisions.)

Isa. xxv. 6—8, I leave entirely blank, to be filled up by the student.

Heb. iii. 13: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Applying the questions as before, you will be led to consider sin,

- I. In its insidious character.
- II. In its damning nature.
- III. In its need of restraints.

This is an example from Witherspoon, which will be a useful exercise for the student to turn, from the purely expository, &c., to the kind of discourse illustrated by the last five or six examples.

Observe pretty much the same manner in Simeon on John xvii. 22: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them," only that here the form of enquiry is less disguised. We enquire what the glory is to which reference is made in respect both to Christ and to his people. The answer is, It is the glory—

- I. Of manifesting the divine power.
- II. Of displaying God's moral perfections.
- III. Of being the sons of God.
- IV. Of union to him.
- V. Of reigning with him.

Now this forms a very beautiful division, just and ingenious.

"The same author on Rom. viii. 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," &c. Here the question seems to be when? or at what time? The answer is—

- I. In seasons of suffering.
- II. In seasons of prayer.

The same on Micah vii. 18—20: "Who is like unto thee?" The keyword, or subject, is "Mercy."

- Q. What have you to notice in regard to this mercy? A. I would speak of it.
- I. In its use.
 - II. In its progress.
 - III. In its consummation.

Again: Simeon on Gal. iv. 22—24: "Abraham had two sons," &c. The author finds in this text a contrast.

- Q. In what respect does this contrast appear? A. We discover a contrast,
- I. In their nature.
 - II. In their disposition.
 - III. In their conduct.
 - IV. In their end.

The same on 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10: "A son shall be born to thee," &c.

- Q. What is remarkable in Solomon, and in which he is to be considered as a type of Christ? A. There is something remarkable,
- I. In his dearness to God.
 - II. In his office assigned him.
 - III. In his long and peaceful reign.

The same on Isa. xxii. 24: "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house."

- Q. What agreement is there between Eliakim and Jesus Christ? I answer, Eliakim resembled Christ—
- I. In succeeding to one who abused his office.
 - II. In the authority committed to him.
 - III. In the benefits resulting from his administration.

The same on 1. Pet. ii. 4, 5: "To whom coming as to a living stone," &c. Subject: the temple a type of the church.

- Q. In what respects may the temple be considered typical of the church? The answer is,
- I. In its foundation.
 - II. In its superstructure.
 - III. In its services.

I think I have said quite enough to convince you that there really is such a thing as the interrogative division, that it agrees with the soundest principles of public speaking, that it is quite distinct in its own nature, that it is of general utility, and easy of execution. It appeared to me necessary to go thus far in the examination on my own account, that I might be quite sure that it was not a creature of my own fancy; for the work of preaching is of too serious a nature to be built upon fancy or on any impracticable theory.

I now offer you one interrogative example, with notes and observations, wherein all the questions are introduced. It is taken from Matt. i. 21: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Here the several circumstances which will form divisions are found on the face of the text, without finding them out by previous operations like the preceding examples. * As this is of the same nature as several that I have just recited, pp. 67—69, it will be proper to commence by bringing the text to these interrogations, *seriatim*, or one after another. Does the text

answer to the first question, Who? that is, Who is the person or persons spoken of? If so, then you have a first division, if it be important enough to make a part: if in any case it be not, then the person or persons, &c., must be named or announced at the end of the exordium, according to circumstances. Or you may say, The text has relation to such person or persons;* and this will sometimes be very proper, because I think it injudicious to make character a division too frequently; for, as there is very often a character included in a text, it looks samely or common to be frequently dwelling on it, and it would in such case indicate that you had no invention or variety. But, in reference to our text, the glorious name "Jesus" is too important in itself, and too essential to subsequent discussion, to omit making it a part. Then I say the text answers the first question, Who?

A. It is JESUS. Here you have a plenitude of subject to dilate upon—the theme of all praise, the fountain of all blessedness, the object of faith, and the foundation of hope.

Having thus disposed of the first question, we bring the second to our text, What? or, what is the thing said by, or of, the person, &c., before named? for nothing is so natural as that this should stand next in order of discussion. Such a person is introduced; what is affirmed? what is to be said or done? or what has or will be said or done? If the text answers to this question, it is sure to form the most important part. This you see, answers to the second part of the regular division, or that which forms the action of it; or it will make the chief head of an accommodational sermon. But, to our present purpose, apply the second question to the text: What does Jesus do? or, What does he effect? Ans. He saves his people, &c. He saves effectually, completely, and everlastingly. His type, Joshua, did not so save. This is, therefore, a very copious part, and one that calls for some display of talent and industry in order to raise it above common-place discussion; for, when a much used text is discussed, this is absolutely necessary, because the speaker is here drawn into a comparison with many other preachers, and it is not desirable to suffer from the comparison; on the contrary, one should study to be distinguished by superiority. In general, those who speak of the commonest subjects in a superior manner are sure to be noticed with encomium and praise. And, what is of infinitely greater moment, and should lie near the heart of every Christian minister, we may thus expect to gain the attention of our hearers, without which they can receive no benefit from our labours.

We now bring our third question to the text, Where? Where were these great transactions exhibited? Ans. In Judea, called by way of eminence, Immanuel's land (Isa. viii. 8), that land which ought to have been pure as Eden, but which was stained with Immanuel's blood. No country ever suffered so much by the sins of its inhabitants, until it became utterly weary of its occupiers, and they were expelled. All that is necessary to observe, is, that the third question does meet its solution, though in preaching it may not be requisite to make it a separate head of discourse. Generally speaking, this third corresponds with Claude's ninth topic, "Observe place." The scriptures are sometimes very explicit in noting place in their narratives. This is so common that no instance need be given; however, take this as one, Gen. xxii. 14. What immense importance was put upon that place! It was there that Abraham's faith was tried, probably where

* A subject or state of things is the same, as before noticed.

Jesus suffered—typified by the offering on Moriah's top. If we could contemplate a thing so awful as our ultimate fall in judgment, we may conceive that both record and conscience will point out, with the greatest accuracy, the place of sinning. And does not place also revive the more pleasing recollections? Ps. lxxxvii. 5, 6. The place of our spiritual birth involves the consideration of the deepest interest: we may well say, "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget its cunning."

We now bring the fourth question to our text, By what means? Observe that, although we have not the means of salvation pointed out in our text, yet means are strongly implied, and would, in some texts, become mainly important. But, in answering the question, you will say: Jesus effected the work by means of his death, or by giving himself for us an offering or sacrifice unto God—he died for our sins.

It is easy to see the great utility of this fourth question. How important is it in the rank of circumstances! How admirably does it round our ideas of a fact, and fill up a space that nothing else could supply! The subject of means mixes itself with all human actions, and nothing scarcely in the divine government is without some reference to it; not because means are necessary to God, as they are to us; for he has only to "command, and it is done," to say "Let there be light, and there is light." Yet, in general, this moral lesson is taught us by the highest example, that means are necessary to an end. And you must keep in view that where this question is used for the purpose of investigation, it tends to elicit the fact of the probability or improbability of a statement made.

I said that means would, in some texts, become mainly important, though in the discussion of this particular text they are introduced only for example's sake; and if the salvation implied in our text had been ascribed to the divine Father instead of the divine Son, as it actually is so ascribed in many scriptures, then we should have been taught this important truth, that our salvation originated solely in the love of the Father, in his sovereign good-will and pleasure, who laid our help on one that was mighty to save, who sanctified his Son, sent him into this world, and gave him a commandment to lay down his life.

As this article furnishes so very important a supply of thought, one would have expected it to make one of Claude's topics; but by no mode of construction can any one of his meet this purpose.

We must next bring the fifth question to our text, For whom? Whatever purposes this question may serve at the bar, in divinity we must claim for it some latitude of interpretation; we must claim it for that upon which the action rests, corresponding with the third part of the regular division, or Claude's fourteenth topic, viz., The end proposed; and sometimes the nineteenth, viz., Grounds and causes. This intention is exemplified by Mr. Simeon on 2 Peter i. 4: "Whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises," &c.

I. The greatness and preciousness of the promises.

II. The ends for which they are given.

Or take another instance from the same author, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7:

I. The state and condition of God's people.

II. The ends for which they are suffered to be in this state.

This question likewise answers to the effect that follows a cause. It will also answer by way of inference, as in the following example on 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

I. What is assumed in this text?

II. What is its just inference? &c.]

But bring this question to our text, "For whom is this salvation wrought out?" The answer is, "His people;" so says the text in positive terms. It follows, therefore, as a matter of course, or, as we have said, by way of inference, that there must be some who are not his people, and consequently are not said to be benefited in the text, though other scriptures may appear to open a wider door. We must always, for ourselves, examine what particular interest we have in the text, as well as recommend the enquiry to others.

The sixth question is also very important to critical enquiry, How is the act done? This article may seem to resemble the fourth, By what means? but the difference is material, and a nice discriminator will soon perceive this, by noting the description of each. This *how?* is nearly the same as, "In what way or manner?" which is quite distinct from the means, and it will be of very frequent use. I may refer to Mr. Simeon's skeleton on Luke iv. 28, 29: The wrath of the people of Nazareth.

I. The occasion of their wrath.

II. The manner in which our Lord escaped its effects; or, which is the same thing, How did he escape from the impending wrath of his enemies?

I also refer to his skeleton on Luke viii. 50. Subject, The faith of Jairus. The whole discussion turns upon this question, as,

I. How was his faith tried?

II. How did it operate?

III. How was it rewarded?

I shall be permitted to quote two more instances from Mr. S., the former of which is on Mark vii. 32—36: "The manner in which this miracle was effected;" or, which is the same thing, How was it effected? and the other is on Luke ix. 29—32: The transfiguration. He considers "The time and manner of Christ's transfiguration."

You see that this simple but edifying manner is quite suitable to the subject of miracles in general, or so often as the preacher may think fit to adopt it. In such cases, the preacher depends for his reputation upon the execution of his plan, and not on the particular form in which it may be stated.

Now let us apply this question to our text: How was this great work of Christ done? Did he support his high character during the performance of it? Did his personal or god-like dignity ever at any time merge into selfishness? Did he indeed "set his face like a flint" against his adversaries? Was his love, his pity, his tender sympathy, ever relaxed or suspended? Did he ever lose sight of his obedience to the will of his heavenly Father? Was his example ever unworthy of imitation? Did he ever exercise his power on unworthy objects? Did his wisdom ever degenerate into cunning? Was his goodness only occasional or partial? Did his work, in any form, or in all its forms collectively, justify our blessed Lord in saying, in reference to it, as he hung upon the cross, "It is finished," so as exactly to correspond with the Old Testament covenants, promises, types, and prophecies? Now, beyond all contradiction, the manner in which Christ executed his work was such as might have been expected from the dignity of his character; and it had the seal of divine approbation, which was testified by his resurrection from the dead, by his ascension into heaven, and by his sitting down at God's right hand, by the subsequent effusion of the Spirit, and by the immense accession of subjects to his kingdom. This should suggest to preachers of the

gospel that the *manner* in which their work is done* is of high importance, as well as the *matter* they deliver.

The seventh question relates purely to time, and is adapted to the investigation and proof of fact. Whenever this is required to confirm the truth of prophecy, it deserves the most serious consideration. One of the proofs of Christ's Messiahship is that his advent, which was essential to the accomplishment of the work of redemption, corresponded with the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10; and of Daniel, chap. ix. 24. This is denominated, by the apostle Paul, "the fulness of time" (Gal. iv. 4), the time predetermined in the eternal councils. I shall not, therefore, offer any apology for applying this seventh question to our text, When, or at what time, did Jesus appear, to accomplish our salvation? It might be observed that, besides the above-mentioned prophetic notices of time, many circumstances concurred to mark the period of his advent as the fittest and most appropriate time of all others: the concurrent expectations of all nations,†—the universal peace that then prevailed,—the closing of the temple of Janus, which, among the Romans, was a wonderful thing,—and the previous extensive conquests of this warlike people, by which they were enabled to establish their own laws and institutions, and thus afford greater facilities for the general diffusion of the gospel. Hence the apostle Paul, obtained the privileges of a Roman citizen, which enabled him to traverse the empire under a kind of legal protection. At that time, too, the Jews had greatly perverted their own law, or made it "void through the commandments of men;" while the Gentile nations were "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." No time could therefore be more appropriate for the manifestation of the divine mercy, nor could circumstances be more apt for the bright rising of the "Sun of Righteousness." Yet I allow that, if a preacher designed to treat on this subject specifically, it might be better to select a text from one of the prophetic passages I have quoted.‡

The preacher has a great personal interest and concern in times and seasons. He, like his divine Master, must "work while it is called day; for the night cometh when no man can work." He must preach the word "in season and out of season:" for lost opportunities can never be recalled, and our regrets at past neglects or omissions are quite unavailing, as respects our fellow-creatures. Upon this point I can speak from experience. Many years, lost as to any good purpose, have passed over me by my neglects; and consequences might have been worse had not the goodness of God prevented. I am now running hard, in the evening of life, to redeem the time that has been mispent during the day of my merciful visitation. You, my dear friends, may profit by what I have to relate of my own experience. Everything is beautiful in its season. The present is to you the season of study, of close application, and perseverance. Let nothing draw you aside from this course. Let not your future days be embittered by the neglect of the past. Remember the old motto, "*Tempus fugit.*"

* See future Lecture, Topic XV.

† See Kidder on the Messiah, vol. 1., pp. 14, 27, 28, &c.

‡ See Horne on emphatic adverbs, vol. ii., p. 541. "Sometimes adverbs of time are emphatic, and a careful notation of the time indicated by them will materially illustrate the force and meaning of the holy scriptures. As in Mal. iii. 16, the word *then* is peculiarly emphatic, as denoting bad times; when men were speaking 'stout words,' &c.,—when all false notions prevailed,—*then*, viz., at this season of open wickedness, there was a remnant of pious Jews who 'spoke often one to another'—met together from time to time to confer on religious subjects; of this eminent notice is taken by Jehovah himself, and this procured for them special promises."

I must acknowledge that my eighth question arrives too late to find room for admission. The text can hardly take it in; however, we must remember its past and very important services;* and here it must be allowed to express itself in the best possible way in answer to the question, Why was all this done? Why such costly sacrifice? Why such deep humiliation? Why that piercing cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The answer is in these memorable words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," that man might not perish eternally.

These several parts collected together, omitting the interrogative form, will appear as follows:—

- I. The person of the Redeemer, under a special name: "Jesus."
- II. The work he effects: Salvation from sin.
- III. The honourable seat of his transactions: Isaiah viii. 8.
- IV. The means used to effect this salvation.
- V. The persons interested in it.
- VI. The manner in which this work was done.
- VII. The time when it was performed.
- VIII. The reason why it was accomplished.

There is perhaps a degree of extravagance in this example which no one would in public imitate: the reason that induced it is sufficiently explained. Still, a suitable outline might be derived from it, perhaps from the numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5. The preacher's own particular design in taking the text must of course govern his selection; and this may be extended to a general rule—that a reasonable liberty must be permitted the preacher to adapt his outline to the design which led to the text itself.

It will immediately occur to the student's mind that this general example on Matt. i. 21, is in fact nothing else but an expository outline; and this is true: it is an expository outline discovered by the questions; and if the first, second, and fifth parts were selected, they would furnish a regular division as discovered by the questions; if the first and second were selected, we should have the accommodational division discovered by the questions. So that we have here a key which opens every door, as from a close attention to this Lecture throughout will be abundantly manifest. If this be true, then a whole month spent in the study of the subject of interrogations would repay the time and labour of the student a thousand-fold. The study before us is the philosophy of the textuarian, by which he analyses his own subjects, and tries the works of others; while its pleasing varieties relieve all fatigue and invite pursuit.

And now in conclusion, allow me to say, if you would profit by the interrogations, if your text has the circumstances of person, operation, means, and effects, if it has manner, time, and place, as far as it possesses these, put down on waste paper all its questions and the answers, and place them before you, and you must of necessity see in a moment of what your text consists, and what will be the most eligible way of managing it, as to its form and character. If your text has no circumstances, still fail not to use the questions to obtain the commanding thought of the text, as in the examples at p. 70, &c.; I mean as to what the subject of the text is; and then raise the question, What will such commanding thought, and the very words of the text conjointly, justify as to principal divisions? I say, if this course be taken, it must be satisfactory. If a list of parallels be also laid before you, sufficient materials and preparations are furnished for all occasions; that is, with any

* See pp. 67, 68, &c.

tolerable share of genius and talent, of judgment and imagination, which are here presupposed; for without these the ministry must not be thought of. A preacher well versed in the science of these Interrogatives, and furnished with Baxter's small pocket-bible with marginal references, is sufficiently equipped to traverse the country, or fill a station with respectability. Yet I allow it is desirable to attain to everything else, within the compass of our power, that really will assist us in our pulpit exercises. The above remarks are offered with a view to encourage those in their work who can command but slender means.

LECTURE VII.

THE OBSERVATIONAL DIVISION.

I BELIEVE Mons. Claude first introduced this species of composition, and no one has since his time attempted anything by way of improvement. I do not, indeed, agree with him or Mr. Simeon in supposing that the Topics are exclusively adapted to the observational method of preaching. They seem to me suited both to this and to every other mode of arrangement; and modern preachers are evidently of the same opinion.

An observation closely assimilates to a reflection or a remark; but the former term is best fitted for my present purpose; it signifies a thought that occurs to the mind on seeing any particular object, or that is suggested to it by any thing we may read or hear; in short, it denotes something that rises in the mind or the imagination by whatever means, and without any assignable cause, though the judgment may co-operate in some cases. All just criticisms are founded on one or both of these. All natural and experimental philosophy follows the same course; just as the *Spectator*, *Rambler*, *Mirror*, and many similar works were founded. Several of our commentators, and especially Matthew Henry, are rich in appropriate and instructive observations.

The course I intend to pursue in this Lecture is to mention Mons. Claude's view of the subject, to offer some pertinent examples, and, lastly, to point out some uses of observation not before noticed, to suggest additional ideas in aid of the study itself, and to trace out the frame of mind which is best adapted to this service.

The following is M. Claude's view of the subject, with some illustrations:—

"Some texts require a discussion by way of consideration or of *observation*. The following hints may serve for general directions:

"1. When texts are clear in themselves, and the matter is well known to the hearers, it would be trifling to amuse the people with *explication*. Such texts must be taken as they are; that is, clear, plain, and evident, and observations only should be made on them.

"2. Most *historical* texts must be discussed in this way; for in a way of explication there would be very little to say. For example, what is there to explain in this passage, John xii. 1—2: 'Then Jesus, six days after the pass-over, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of those that sat at the table with him?' Would it not be a loss of time and labour to explain these words? and are they not clearer than any comment can make them? The way of observation, then, must be taken."

Henry's Commentary furnishes numerous examples in illustration of the above remark, which are as excellent as they are appropriate. I shall quote

but one, which will serve to show how passages which may at first sight appear less fraught with instruction, may by this method be so treated as admirably to subserve the great purposes of ministerial labour. It is on 2 Sam. xxii. 1 : "And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." On this passage Mr. Henry founds the following observations :—

I. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart : many were those who hated him and sought his ruin ; Saul is particularly named, either as distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations or as the chief of his enemies, who was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let not those whom God loves marvel if the world hate them.

II. Those that trust God in a way of duty shall find him a present help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so. God delivered him out of the hand of Saul. He takes special notice of this. Remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular emphasis. He delivered him also "out of the hand of all his enemies," one after another, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another ; and David, from his own experience, has assured us that, though "many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers him out of them all," Ps. xxxiv. 19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven ; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all that are his, 2 Tim. iv. 18.

III. Those that have received signal mercies from God ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. David spoke, not only to himself, for his own pleasure, nor merely to those about him, for their instruction, but "to the Lord," for his honour, "the words of this song." Then we sing with grace when we sing to the Lord. In distress he "cried with his voice" (Ps. cxlii. 1), therefore with his voice he gave thanks. Thanksgiving to God is the sweetest vocal music.

IV. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God. In the day that God delivered him he sang this song. While the mercy is fresh, and our devout affections are most excited by it, let the thank-offering be brought, that it may be kindled with the fire of those affections.

"3. There are some texts which require both explication and observation,* as when some parts may need explaining. For example, Acts i. 10 : *And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.* Here it will be necessary to explain, in a few words, the cause of their looking stedfastly towards heaven ; for by lifting their eyes after their divine Master they expressed the inward emotions of their minds. It will be needful also to explain this other expression, *As he went up* ; and to observe that it must be taken in its plain and popular sense, and that it signifies, not merely the removal of his visible presence, but of his entire humanity. This is the natural sense of the words, and the observation is necessary to guard us against that sense which the Church of Rome imposes on them, for the sake of transubstantiation. You may also explain briefly this other expression, *Behold two men*, and show that they were two

* *Some texts require both explication and observation.* Here the meaning and terms may be made clear in the exordium, in a brief and familiar manner ; as by Dr. Moss, in a sermon before the governors of Christ's Hospital, at St. Sepulchre's church, 1708. After a familiar explication of Luke xii. 21, he proceeded to found upon the text the following observations :—

I. That a greedy desire of riches, and a fond reliance on them, is the most wretched kind of folly and improvidence.

II. That the best enjoyment and wisest improvement of our worldly wealth is to be rich towards God ; that is, so to use and employ what we have as to recommend ourselves to his benediction and favour thereby.—*Robinson's Note on Claude.*

This example is not, however, the most appropriate ; Dr. Moss's two parts are more properly *propositions* than observations.

angels in human shape. Here you may discuss the question of angelic appearances under human form. Notwithstanding these brief explications, this is a text that must be discussed by way of observation.

“Observe, in general, when explication and observation meet in one text, you must always explain the part that needs explaining *before* you make any observations ; for observations must not be made till you have established the sense plainly and clearly.”

Thus Mr. Henry first treats the passage, Jeremiah xxv. 15—29, in his ordinary way of explication, and then founds upon it the following observations :—

1. That there is a God that judges in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide.

2. That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure.

3. That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the *year of recompences* for the controversy of Zion.

4. That the *burden of the word of the Lord* will at last become the burden of his judgments. Isaiah had prophesied long since against most of these nations (ch. xiii. &c.), and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling.

5. That those who are ambitious of power and dominion commonly become the troublers of the earth and the plagues of their generation. Nebuchadnezzar was so proud of his might that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turn the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince when others thought him no better than a great pirate.

6. That the greatest pomp and power in this world are of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadnezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield and become captives.

“4. Sometimes an observation may be made by way of explication, as when you would infer something important from the meaning of an original term in the text. For example, Acts ii. 1 : *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* It will be proper here to explain and enforce the Greek word, *ὁμοθυμαδον*, which is translated *with one accord* ; for it signifies that they had the same hope, the same judgment ; and thus their unanimity is distinguished from an exterior and negative agreement, which consists in the mere profession of having no difference of sentiment and in not falling out ; but this may proceed from negligence, ignorance, or fear of tyrannical authority. The uniformity of which the Romish church boasts is of this kind. But the unanimity of the disciples was inward and positive. They were of *one heart* and *one soul*. This explication, you perceive, is itself a very just observation, and there are very many passages of scripture which may be treated of in a similar manner.

“5. Observations for the most part ought to be *theological* ; that is to say, they should belong to a system of religion. Sometimes, indeed, we may make use of observations historical, philosophical, and critical ; but these should be used sparingly and seldom, or on necessary occasions, and when they cannot well be avoided ; and even then they ought to be pertinent, and not common, that they may be heard with satisfaction. Make it a law to be generally very brief on these observations, and to inform your audience that you only make them *en passant*.

“6. Observations should not be proposed in scholastic style, nor in common-place guise. They should be seasoned with a sweet urbanity, accommodated to the capacities of the people, and adapted to the manners of good men. One of the best expedients for this purpose is the reduction

of obscure matters to a natural, popular, modern air. You can never attain this ability unless you acquire a habit of conceiving clearly of subjects yourself, and of expressing them in a clear, familiar, easy manner, remote from every thing forced and far-fetched. All long trains of argument, all embarrassments of divisions and sub-divisions, all metaphysical investigations, which are mostly impertinent, and, like the cities and houses, hills, mountains, &c, which we imagine in the clouds, the mere creatures of fancy—all these should be avoided.

"7. Care, however, should be taken to avoid the opposite extreme, which consists in making only poor, dry, spiritless observations, frequently said under pretence of avoiding school divinity, and of speaking only popular things. Endeavour to think clearly, and try also to think nobly. Let your observations be replete with beauty as well as propriety, the fruits of a fine fancy under the direction of a sober judgment. If you be inattentive to this article, you will pass for a contemptible declaimer, of mean and shallow capacity, exhausting yourself without edifying your hearers."

These are most excellent sentiments indeed. It did not appear in Claude's day, and in his nation, that such a popular and easy kind of preaching would prevail, so that his words with us are of the value of prophecy—that philosophy and refined learning should at last stoop to popular address, a glorious triumph indeed. The time has now come when the populace, the people, the great mass of mankind, shall hear "the voice of the Son of God" in a language they can understand, and by men not raised too high above themselves, who have common feelings and wants with them, a little nearer in rank to the fishermen of Galilee than many in past ages were, who really have been assiduous enough in teaching the few, but whose great learning disqualified them for the work of instructing the multitude.* And while it is now, and ever will be, at least till the latter-day glory arrive, necessary that we should have a succession of learned men for the higher walks of literature, and for the instruction of the rich, yet they cannot do all the work of evangelizing the great mass of mankind. Hence arises the necessity of a little army of preachers to preach "the gospel to the poor"—men endowed with a decent degree of learning and skill to handle the word of God. We have no quarrel with the learned upon this subject; they occupy a station which occasional preachers could not fill; but it is the occasional preachers who must occupy the more extended lines, which for want of numbers and other circumstances the former never can cover. I hope, however, that, as times are evidently changing, a great number of learned preachers will soon arise and give their powerful assistance to those of the humbler order, and that they will unite with us, in plain observational preaching, after the manner of Bishop Beveridge and some others, who have led the way in this style of public discourse. If they will cordially unite with us, we shall be thankful; but if they refuse, we will forgive them. By and by, this old rust of prejudice will rub off, and either the learned of the present age or of that in immediate succession will join heart and hand with those who are now so earnest in the good work of recovering a licentious population—almost beyond the power of the law to restrain,—a population which, by its poverty and wretchedness, brought on or increased by low vices, is a burden to the public which can hardly be endured, so that, spiritually and temporally, a popular gospel,

* See Appendix, on Pure English Words.

from a great number of plain men, is absolutely necessary to save the country. No method of preaching or of observation can be right that does not suit the condition of the multitude, of the whole world; and nothing else can measure the extent of ancient prophecy, "that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."* Nothing else can meet the demands of true philanthropy. Nothing else can be called an imitation of Christ, or of the apostle Paul, his laborious servant. The waters of the sanctuary are not to be confined, but spread out far and wide, wherever ruin and wretchedness exist.

The propriety and excellence of Claude's rules are sufficiently obvious. He might have added that observational preaching ought to be a faithful delineation of persons, characters, and occurrences,—the Divine conduct,—the consequences of a vicious course,—the influence of Divine agency on the affairs of men,—particularly correct delineations of piety in every situation of life,—the experience of God's people, their trials, their encouragements, their hopes and fears,—resemblance of their experience in every age and under every dispensation,—in short, "to show the very form and body of things" in real life, and thus to derive profitable instruction from every source. To manage this well, you must possess considerable knowledge, not only of scripture, but of human nature itself, in all its diversified forms, and of the springs of human action.

Having paid some attention to our popular sermon-writers, I find that they frequently adopt this mode of discussion. The following by Jay, on Ezekiel xxix. 17—20, is an excellent illustration. The introduction describes the decline and fall of Tyre, and is beautifully drawn; this introduces the Babylonian emperor as the instrument in God's hand for effecting its destruction, from which, however, he himself derived but little advantage, as the Tyrians still kept the possession or command of the seas: with this advantage they secured all their treasures on board their fleets; hence, according to the text, God is pleased to give him Egypt for his reward, because he fulfilled the divine decree in the total overthrow and destruction of this proud and luxurious city. After this introduction, the following observations are made on the passage:—

I. The disposal of states and nations is the work of divine Providence. Scripture every where recognizes a sovereign disposer of events; Dan. ii. 21; 1 Kings xi. 12. The mutation of the kingdom of Israel, it is said was "of the Lord." In the text, Jehovah is represented as evidently the director of the great political change that Egypt was about to suffer, as the general of an army, who regulates the movements of his obedient troops. Again: consider the divine dispensations with respect to *authority* (Jer. xxvii. 5), with respect to power (nothing too hard for God to do, Isaiah xl. 15, &c.), with respect to his *righteousness*, Ezek. xviii. Apply all these evidences to modern times, with relation to nations, cities, families, individuals; it is equally "he that ruleth in the armies of heaven and amidst the inhabitants of the earth, to build up, to cast down, to give, or to take away." There are, therefore, no fortuitous events, no indiscretions or neglects; but every thing that occurs in the world is according to the rule of Infinite Wisdom.

II. Men may serve God really when they do not serve him by design. In respect to the history before us, we can easily trace the event to God, though it seems con-

* The will of God is that "all men should be saved;" and to that end it is his will that all men (that is, all descriptions of men, great and small, rich and poor, learned and ignorant) should come to the knowledge of the truth; that is, the gospel which brings life and immortality to light, not only the fundamental truths of faith towards God, of repentance from dead works, and of a future judgment, but all the sublimer truths concerning the scheme of man's redemption.—Bp. Horsley, vol. i. p. 5.

cealed by human policy: the men obeyed their commander, the commander obeyed Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar obeyed his pride and ambition, and his pride and ambition obeyed the rule of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing of God; but God knew him, girded him, and guided him. "He wrought for me," says Jehovah. Great bad men are made to do his work. He turns their thoughts as the rivers of water; he can make them act necessarily, while they are acting voluntarily.

III. None can be losers by any thing they do for God. In one way or other he will recompense them. Even services done for him by worldly men obtain a temporal reward. The Egyptian midwives feared God, and did not as the king commanded them; therefore God dealt well with them. Because Jehu executed the Divine purposes against Ahab, his family for three or four generations shall sit upon the throne of Israel. So here, Nebuchadnezzar is well rewarded for his serving against Tyre. We have seen the fact that wicked and idolatrous kings, and others, have been recompensed. The inference is plain, that, if such characters have had their reward, well may the servants of God expect that God will not be unmindful of their work and labour of love, of whatever kind it may be.

We must have several examples of observational discourses before its peculiar excellences can be appreciated.

The last example consisted of three observations from a *long text*; the one I will now give consists of several observations from a short text. It is by Beddome, on Luke vii. 42: "And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both." The introduction embraces a few remarks on the fact that we are all debtors to God. The following observations form the outline:—

I. We observe that it is an unspeakable mercy to have our sins forgiven; Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. This is the principal blessing of the covenant of grace, without which no temporal blessing can be truly enjoyed; it is *peculiar, comprehensive, permanent, and complete*.

II. It is the sole prerogative of God to forgive sins. Ministers can forgive sins only *declaratively*, showing from scripture who are the proper objects of forgiveness. The apostles never said to any one "*Thy sins are forgiven*." Whatever other benefits they conferred by their power of working miracles, this belonged properly to Jehovah; Isaiah xliii. 25. Hence the saints have ever sought the manifestation of pardon from God only; Ps. li.

III. Those whom God forgives have nothing to pay. The whole creation has become insolvent. No future obedience can avail. It is a vain pretence that we have not sinned so much as others. If we owe fifty or five hundred pence, it is in vain to say, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all:" the safest way is to acknowledge that we have nothing to pay, and of this God always convinces his people.

IV. Those whose sins are pardoned are first *brought to see that they have nothing to pay*. "I through the law am dead to the law." I expect nothing from it in a way of salvation.

V. The forgiveness of sins is all of grace; Micah vii. 18. The gift of Christ is a gift of grace; his offering for sin was an act of grace.

VI. The forgiveness of sins tends to the glory of God. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of his grace." We are saved that we should be to the praise and glory of his grace.

Observations should conform to their title as strictly as possible. They should not be, as in the example just finished, argumentative discussions of doctrinal points: even the acknowledged excellence of such points does not justify their introduction in that form. They are of too important a character to be properly discussed in a single discourse; whereas observations, though numerous, may be dismissed with brief illustration. It is true Mr. Beddome calls these by the term *remarks*; but this does not invalidate the objection.

The following example is not liable to the same objections. It is on Acts xi. 23: "Who, when he had come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad," &c.

The exordium settles the meaning of the word *grace* in the text,

I. We observe that where the grace of God is, it will be seen. Like its divine Author, grace in its own nature is invisible, but is manifest in its effects. It is a seed that springs up—a light that shines—fire that burns; it illumines the understanding, sanctifies the will, subdues the heart. In this manner the Christian holds forth the word of life. Abating something for hypocrisy, it is seen in the countenance, it shines in conversation, and is manifested by actions.

II. These appearances are matter of joy to Christians, and especially to faithful ministers. Barnabas rejoiced that idolators had become real Christians, genuine disciples, honourable additions to Christ's kingdom. At such things angels rejoice. Paul says, "What is our joy? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy," 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

I have also selected from the same author the outline of another discourse illustrative of the observational mode of discussion, founded on Acts ix. 4: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

I. It is the general character of unconverted men to be of a persecuting spirit. Luther says: "Cain will kill Abel to the end of the world; Ishmael will persecute Isaac; the seed of the serpent, the seed of the woman."

II. Christ has his eye upon persecutors. Nothing could be more piercing than Christ's view of Saul, when he was travelling, full of fury, to Damascus.

III. The kindness or injury done to Christ's people, Christ considers as done to himself. "Why persecutest thou me?" His poor disciples at Damascus were as the apple of his eye. Let persecutors think of this and tremble.

IV. Christ's call to the persecutor was to convince him of sin, as the first step to conversion. We know the effects which followed: he was deeply humbled, and cried, What wouldst thou have me to do?

V. The calls of Christ are earnest and *particular*. This call was to Saul, to Saul of Tarsus, not to those that were with him. Thus it was also in the case of Zaccheus, Luke xix. In the present day, while the minister is addressing the whole congregation, Christ by his Spirit says to such a particular sinner, "Thou art the man?"

VI. Persecution is a great sin; and, when brought home to the conscience, will be found to be so. Paul never forgot it; 1 Tim. i. 13.

VII. Jesus Christ condescends to reason with Saul: "Why persecutest thou me?"

1. Is there any reason on my part?
2. Is there any reason on my people's part?
3. Is there any reason on thy part? Will such conduct answer the end thou proposest to thyself? Canst thou exterminate what I resolve to plant? Canst thou wage war with an arm like mine? Is it not hard for thee to kick against the pricks?

The following is from Lavington's Sermons to Young People. The text is Luke xiii. 8: "Lord, let it alone this year also." The observations are, however, grounded upon the whole parable, and are as follows:—

I. That some persons have peculiar advantages above others for religious improvement. The privileges of this kingdom, of this congregation and neighbourhood, are singularly great. You are the fig-tree alluded to in the parable, planted, not in a wild common or barren desert, exposed to blasting storms and the ravages of wild beasts, but in a garden enclosed and inspected, where you have all the advantages of soil and cultivation. Look abroad into foreign countries. If your lot had been cast there, you would have been brought up in all the ignorance of popery or Mahomedism. But we need not go so far. Only look to some of the dark corners of our own land, some obscure villages, where the gospel in its purity and power is as little known as in the wilds of Africa. If you had been born or brought up there, you would to this day have known nothing of the guilt and misery of your natural state, nor of the way of salvation by a Redeemer. But, through the distinguishing providence of God, the lines have fallen to you in more pleasant places. Ordinances are the means appointed by God for conveying and stirring up that grace which alone can make us flourishing and fruitful; and, when these are enjoyed in all their variety and energy, the effect is frequently visible and glorious.

II. God expects that persons under fructifying means should bring forth fruit. This is the grand design to which all ordinances should be subservient; Tit. ii. 11. The sacred appointments of Christ, though ever so faithfully administered, and ever so regularly attended on, and ever so highly extolled, do not accomplish their design till holiness be implanted and promoted. Religion, like a golden thread, must run

through every part of our conduct ; we must everywhere and at all times maintain a conversation becoming the gospel, and let the world see that, amidst all our industry in our secular callings, our *principal concern* is to lay up treasure in heaven and be rich in good works, and that we can walk with God even when surrounded with fellow-creatures. Thus must the fruits of holiness appear and shine in all that pretend to be planted in the house of the Lord. It is not enough that there be an accidental grape, or bunch, here and there upon a single branch, but every branch must have its share of fruit. We must be "holy in all manner of conversation."

III. That many, notwithstanding those advantages and expectations, continue fruitless. It is but to cast my eyes around, and I see many living lamentable examples of this.

IV. That God keeps an exact account how long you have enjoyed the means of grace: "Behold, these *three years*." Perhaps you keep no account yourselves. Numberless sabbaths come and go without any notice at all, not thinking them of any value, yea, rather looking upon them as an incumbrance. You care not how you trifle them away, and are glad of any company or amusement that will help you to get rid of them. What can hinder the awful sentence, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness?" Would it not be well to call yourselves to account now?

V. That it is infinitely hurtful and hazardous to continue unfruitful under the means of grace. "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none ; cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground?" A vineyard is a place for fruit-trees to grow ; but, if you bear no fruit, it will not be long a place for you. You might sooner hope to escape in a forest or desert than in this garden of the Lord, where you not only get no good but do much harm, by your bad example causing the good ways of the Lord to be evil spoken of. The reason given for ordering this barren fig-tree to be cut down is, it cumbered the ground ; it took up the room which might be occupied with more thriving plants, and by its pernicious shade kept off the sun and showers from those trees that grew near it. Perhaps you never thought of this. You did not, perhaps, expect to get any good, but you had no suspicion that you were doing or getting any hurt ; but, if you did not know it before, I tell you now, that there is great danger of trifling with sacred institutions ; for, if you do not glorify God in them, God will glorify himself on you ; you will be considered as cumber-grounds, and will be in danger of being speedily cut down. You know what God said of his unfruitful vineyard, Isa. v. 5—7. There are many other awful declarations of what judgments God will inflict on wicked and slothful servants ; God usually warns before he strikes ; and, when he does strike, he does not pour out all his fury at once, but first inflicts some gentler judgment to try if that will rouse us, and, if that will not do, then he redoubles his strokes with greater keenness and severity. There is an awful instance of this in Amos iv. 6—12. Now, though through God's kind indulgence we have not yet felt the judgments there mentioned, in all their horrors, many of them have been shaken over us more than once of late, so that the very recital of them may well make us tremble.

VI. That we ought not to give up any for lost, though they have been long unfruitful, while the means of grace are continued. Can you wonder that I should have been tempted to say this morning, "Lord, it is to no purpose to preach to these young people any more ; thou mayest as well cut them down at once, for no good can be expected"? But the dresser of the vineyard was wiser and more compassionate than his under-labourer, for he said, "No ! let them alone this year also, till I shall dig about them and dress them, and, if they bear fruit, well." What an awful *if* is that ! It intimates a *possibility* that those who have been long barren may become fruitful, that those who have been many years careless and unprofitable hearers may become attentive and obedient. They *may* indeed ; but the improbability is great. While there is life and light there is hope. While the gospel is continued, and while I am permitted to appear in this place as an ambassador of Christ, and in his name beseech you to be reconciled to God, there is encouragement to hope that the treaty is not broken off, and that, notwithstanding all your former neglect and refusal of gospel grace, it is yet an accepted time, it is *yet* a day of salvation.

There is only one clause more in this parable to be taken notice of, but it is an awful one.

VII. "If it bear fruit, well ; but, if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." It is with reluctance I mention it ; I would willingly leave room for further intercession to let you alone this year, and the next, and the next again. I know not how to set bounds to the divine patience by saying, "Hitherto shall it come, but no further," or by supposing that when this present year of trial expires the scene shall close, and your doom shall be fixed for ever. There is something so awfully tremendous in this, that I can

hardly persuade myself to publish it ; and yet on the other hand, to know that such a declaration has been made by the dresser of the vineyard, and not acquaint you with it, you yourself would be the first to upbraid me with unkindness and unfaithfulness. Be it known unto you, therefore, that if, notwithstanding all the gracious invitations of the gospel, and all the solemn warnings and rebukes of providence, you continue impenitent and unfruitful, death will be commissioned to cut you down and cast you out into everlasting burnings. Is it not amazing that the Lord has not long ago been weary of suppressing his wrath, and said, "Ah ! I will ease me of my adversaries?" It is not that he is indifferent to your conduct ; it is not that he is slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but it is because he is long-suffering to us-ward, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Remember, forbearance is not forgiveness. Nothing is more offensive to God than such a state of impenitence and unfruitfulness.

I have given this outline at greater length than was necessary for my present purpose, as I shall have occasion to refer to it again in a future lecture. At present, all that it is necessary to observe upon it is, that the last head of discourse is rather awkwardly introduced, so as not to agree with the others in form ; and though, so far as the effect of a discourse is concerned, this may be considered of little consequence, yet it would be as well to exercise a little ingenuity to avoid such discrepancies. If, for example, our author had expressed himself in some such way as the following, all that he wished to say upon the clause might have been introduced, and the form of *observation* would have been preserved :—

VII. That, though divine forbearance may be long extended to the unfruitful professor, yet the period of forbearance is limited : "then, after that, thou shalt cut it down."

The last example I shall adduce, is on 1 Sam. vii. 12 : "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." We observe,

I. That mercies received demand grateful acknowledgments. Every mercy, even the least of unnumbered thousands—but especially such a mercy as the Israelites at the time named in the text experienced, considering the deplorable circumstances they were in—call for gratitude and praise. Such to us is the promised mercy recorded in Luke i. 72 ; Col. i. 13 ; Rom. xii. 1.

II. Returns of praise should be *instantaneous*, the spontaneous effusions of a grateful heart. Samuel set about the work immediately ; so the leper in the gospel, Luke xvii. 15. The wise man urges, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," Eccles. ix. 10. Our hearts are not to be trusted for a day. A pretence (if such a one had been set up) that some delay might give the opportunity of producing a more elegant column, would have been quite frivolous. It might have brought more honour to the artist, but not more glory to God. There is a disposition in men to adorn their services to God, not considering that there is often more pride than piety in the motive.

III. The sensations of gratitude are truly *sweet in their first and powerful impressions*. Samuel never was more delightfully engaged than in raising this stone of remembrance. The stone, though heavy, lost its weight in his hands ; though hard, his gratitude could penetrate its surface, and compel it to speak a language it knew not.

IV. We observe a cautious abstinence from self-praise. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." This reminds us of the Psalmist, and of the redeemed in heaven, Ps. cxv. 1 ; Rev. v. 13.

V. God's helps are not only *seasonable*, but sometimes *wonderful*. In the history before us, the Lord thundered that day upon the Philistines in such a remarkable manner as totally to shake their wonted courage. They had neither power to fight nor to flee. Their cheeks turn pale ; their spirits sink ; their limbs tremble ; confusion seizes them ; they are an easy conquest even to a people that had lost their military character and were destitute of the means of defence or attack.

VI. The deliverance celebrated came *in answer to prayer*. It was while Samuel was crying to God for help that the thunder began to roll. Ps. l. 15 ; Isa. lxxv. 24. How

thankful should we be that we have a greater than Samuel to pray for us, and to intercede for us against the powers of darkness!

VII. Acts of gratitude should have as much of a *permanent* form as possible. Samuel took a *stone*, &c. Let mercies be written in marble—injuries in sand. Alas! how often is our gratitude like the morning cloud and early dew! but we ought better to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, and to consider, as Samuel tells this people, “what great things Jehovah has done for us,” 1 Sam. xii. 24.

Observations ought to be, as much as possible, directed to a single object; and that object should be reserved for the last. In the example just given, these rules are observed. The fourth and sixth observations, however, ought to have been presented in a *general* form, to agree with the others. With this exception, there is a unity in the whole. The effect of many discourses is lost for want of this excellence. Digression may be occasionally allowed; but it must only be introduced as the episode of an epic poem, and the hearers must, when it ends, be regularly brought back to the place from which the digression was made.

The advantage of possessing a discriminating mind, a power of reflection, and a penetrating judgment, is incalculably great, and raises one part of mankind above the rest as much as the sons of Anak were above the little grasshopper-like men that went to spy out Canaan. We see the penetrating observations found in the books of Job and Solomon. Time has not weakened these remarks on mankind. Whether a man of this capacity hears or sees what the day affords, whether he explores foreign countries or takes his station amid the “busy hum of men,” or whether he retires to the solitude of a country village, he has materials of thought to which others are entire strangers. He is fitted for a public writer, or for a parlour companion. He has a talent that will secure him honour in any pursuit or profession, and enable him to strike out for himself such a course of action as will preserve the distinction he has attained. But the preacher shares largely in the distinctions it confers. The study of observational preaching ought therefore to be pursued, though the preacher should never produce one entire sermon of this kind during life.

A preacher well skilled in the art of making observations will appear to advantage in every part of a discourse. For instance:—

1. In an exordium, if an *original* observation be made on the words of the text, so much the better; but, if it be only a *judicious* one, it will establish such a prepossession in the preacher’s favour, as will procure him a candid hearing throughout the discourse.

2. Pure observation may be introduced occasionally, of whatever kind the discourse be; for it may very much aid the main design.

3. Sometimes a discourse may be partly expository and partly observational, without any breach of propriety.

4. Some powerful and just observations ought to conclude the discourse, as I shall show you in a future lecture.* So that there is no place in any kind of discourse that will not admit of this article. Nevertheless, considerable judgment is necessary to determine whether the observations which occur will or will not contribute to the usefulness of a discourse, and in what part of the sermon they may be placed to advantage.

The materials of observation for the pulpit are various and important. The Bible is the best and surest source of observation, and therefore this book ought to be well known and well studied. The moral department of Dr. Johnson’s *Rambler* opens some fine articles of observation: the matter

* See Lecture XXXI.

of these will be helpful to wisdom, and what shall so be found, as far as it is applicable to our work, is not to be despised. More immediately to the point are the works of Jeremy Taylor, Robert Hall, Horsley, etc., which cannot fail of assisting thought. I am convinced that comment,* as a study, will do more real service as to observational sermons than any other human means, for throwing life into them. Although I have recommended the study of the writings of wise observers of mankind, that you may be wise (for "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise"), and although I do lay very considerable stress on the means, yet it is not in the cave or the cloister, the college or the academy, that the art is to be perfected or matured. Nor are you to run into scenes of dissipated life, not even as spectators, that you may "behold all things that are done under the sun;" but you must read and study your books at the early dawn of the morning, and in the daytime read men.

Expatriate free o'er all this scene of man,
A mighty maze, yet not without a plan :
The proper study of mankind is man.—POPE.

It remains for me to trace out the fittest frame of mind for the exercise of observational preaching. The mind may be too harsh and severe, and must be softened; or it may be too excursive, and must be restrained.

The preacher ought to be candid, urbane; he ought also to bring his observations down to the level of his hearers' understanding: all this requires great wisdom. As to the first of these points, beware of a censorious spirit; you are not constituted a judge, but an observer in court. Mankind, in all their ranks, are weak and erring creatures, and an easy prey to temptation. "They know not what they do." They ask for your compassion, not your censures. Look therefore upon your fellow-men with benevolence; pray and weep for them rather than condemn them. What you behold is human nature itself, whether in male or female form. It is true we might expect better conduct than that which we too often see in our fellow-creatures; but better knowledge, conscience, duty, obligations, have often but a very feeble power in the day of temptation, for the "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." You have another reason for treating your fellow-creatures with tenderness—you were once exactly as they are; nay, you are still compassed with infirmity, still subject to every species of weakness, and liable to fall into sin. And this furnishes an additional direction how you are to make your observations upon the Lord's people: I say, with similar compassion; the old man of sin in them is not destroyed, and this any one will believe without a scrutiny. Moreover, with regard to good people, you will mark the effects and progress of grace upon them, and what restraints it affords; observe what it is that seems to improve their character and what hinders their progress, what is their particular excellency as individuals, and what are their peculiar failings. This survey is not to be made in the pulpit by looking upon them in the gross, but by individual examination or observation, in order to which it will be necessary to possess (as was said of Lord Stowell) "the profoundest knowledge of the human heart, the deepest reading of its motives and impulses, the most intimate acquaintance with its affections, and the most sagacious detection and development of its secret influence on actions, how-

* See Lecture XXXVI. [Bishop Hall's *Contemplations* stands pre-eminent in the department of wise and holy observation.]

ever carefully disguised and falsified." To this I add the cognition of the workings of grace, how unknown frequently to its possessor as to some of its characters, and in what manner errors of this nature involve distress and perplexity to its disconsolate subject for a season; and all this with a view that in the pulpit you may be so accurate as to cause them to wonder how you know their characters so well. Whether you scrutinize mankind in general or the church in particular, your philanthropy, your love, must never be left at home. You study books, and you survey mankind; but it is not to become a misanthrope—a sour dissatisfied being, disgusted at the world you live in; but it is that by your wise observations you may be qualified to make the world better, at least that part of it which may constitute your particular charge.

There is yet another caution necessary to your becoming useful observers of mankind. As observers, you are not exempt from danger. You have need to stand on your guard lest you become imitators. A great part of the commerce of wickedness is carried on by the eye. David found it so to his cost. It might be some pious purpose that drew him to the roof of his palace; but, alas! he found fuel for his lust. Again, surveying those that are in better circumstances than ourselves may tend to excite envy and discontent, as was the case with pious Asaph, Ps. lxxiii. Viewing the most wretched of our neighbours, we may be led harshly to censure them for extravagance or imprudence. Now against such dangers we are commanded to "watch and pray." "Be sober and vigilant." Observant we must be; but we must be watchful as well as observant. We must not touch the unclean thing; and, instead of falling into snares, we must endeavour to preserve others from falling, or strive to recover them after they have fallen.

The state of a preacher's mind will generally give the leading character to his discourse; and, although it be true that every kind of sermon requires a fit and prepared state of mind, yet the observational kind demands it more eminently than any other. Other kinds have their guards and rules for the due preservation of order, which this kind has not. If our sermon be textual, we follow our text. If our text be reduced to a subject, we are confined to that subject. If cast into the form of propositions, the propositions have their laws and regulations; but in our observational discourses we found our divisions upon some general principle, and this is always liable to abuse. Upon this general principle we take a licence to create our subject, and more or less to utter our own sentiments; to give our views, though, it is allowed, with some reference to the text itself; but we are not without danger of engrafting upon it that which has but a remote connexion with its sacred truths.

General observation affords a licence of which many are tempted to avail themselves imprudently. The wit will ever be ready to make his witty observations upon persons and sentiments, perfectly *ad libitum*; sometimes even scripture language is employed for the unhallowed purpose of giving point to wit, and pungency to satire. Now though the existence of wit is an indication of talent,—of rapid and lively conception, which, apart from its vain exercise, is a high accomplishment in the preacher,—yet being unchastised, unbridled, it will only indulge in indecencies. It is clear, therefore, that under its influence the spiritual benefit of the people is insecure. Hence it is most necessary that preachers of this character should proceed to observations with a strong hand against an improper indulgence

of this talent. The wit which never gives offence to God or our fellow Christians, but which is mixed with sweet urbanity and love, may, if sparingly used, give life to a discourse, and improve every subject. Persons of a witty turn, and of exuberant speech, even though they may be good men, are hardly to be trusted in observational preaching; at least, they ought to confine themselves to the strict truth of their texts; otherwise, while they flatter themselves that they only manifest a proper zeal for the glory of God, they may in reality be yielding to a carnal temper, to mistaken notions, to unfounded prejudices, taking the seat of judgment without authority. On the contrary, "charity thinketh no evil;" and the candid, charitable preacher makes allowance for the mixture of evil with good which is to be found in every human character. "He expects none to be faultless; and he is unwilling to believe that there are any without some commendable quality. In the midst of many defects he discovers a virtue. Under the influence of personal resentment he can be just to the merit of an enemy. He never lends an open ear to those defamatory reports and dark suggestions which, among the tribes of the censorious, circulate with so much rapidity, and meet with such ready acceptance. He is not hasty to judge, and he requires full evidence before he will condemn. As long as an action can be ascribed to different motives, he considers it no mark of sagacity to impute it always to the worst. Where there is just ground for doubt, he keeps his judgment undecided; and, during the period of suspense, leans to the most charitable construction which an action can bear. When he must condemn, he condemns with regret, and without those aggravations which the severity of others adds to the crime. He listens calmly to the apology of the offender, and readily admits every extenuating circumstance which equity can suggest. How much soever he may blame the principles of any sect or party, he never confounds under one general censure all that belong to that party or sect. He charges them not with such consequences of their tenets as they reject or disavow. From one wrong opinion he does not infer the subversion of all sound principles; nor conclude from one bad action that all regard to conscience is overthrown. When he 'beholds the mote in his brother's eye,' he remembers 'the beam in his own.' He commiserates human frailty, and judges of others according to the principles by which he would think it reasonable that they should judge of him. In a word, he views men and actions in the clear sunshine of charity and good nature, and not in that dark and sullen shade which jealousy and party-spirit throw over all characters." *

Now I think that, as far as I have proceeded in examining the due state of mind in which observation should be pursued, *goodness* is the predominant character. "The good man, out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things;" that is, the most gracious and edifying things; whatever he utters is for edification, not to gratify unamiable feelings or passions; for we allow that things which may have some truth in them may be so uttered. But, so far as motives may be contaminated, there is in this case a radical fault.

It may here be observed, as a further comment on what has just been quoted, that we should be candid to persons of an opinion contrary to our own, that in observational preaching we should not utter anything of a sectarian nature: even our own sentiments upon disputed points are better

omitted. Opportunities will occur better adapted for maintaining what we hold to be right, when texts are before us that naturally fall into the expository or propositional plans, in which we can do something like justice to these subjects, and not introduce them by a kind of side-wind, where nobody expected or desired them. To avoid this completely, I would never treat a text by observation that at all called upon me to oppose the opinions and sentiments of any other sect or denomination, or to defend my own. Observation should be a kind of neutral ground, in which neither party should approach with hostile intentions. It is in this kind of by-play that we often expose our sentiments, and say something in an unguarded manner which afterwards we are obliged so to explain as to get rid of an unpleasant imputation, which at last we may not so effectually do as we could wish. I have known very great men obliged to write a volume of explanation and defence, and at last the number of their friends was no way increased by such a measure.

From what has been said, it will, I think, be apparent that observation, which may pervade every part of a discourse, is the salt or savour of Christian preaching when, and only when, it issues from a Christian heart, and from a sound judgment: and I have only one thing more to add to this, namely, the necessity of a truly spiritual mind or understanding. As, however, there are no Christian hearts by nature, where "all thought is wild, and ignorance the soil," we must look to renewing grace, to that "new creation" marked in the sacred page, for dispositions and abilities to prosecute our designs. Some suppose that the higher faculties of our minds escaped, as some firm column, in the general ruin of our nature. The pride and conceit of this notion is man's greatest stumbling-block. The scriptures tell us that "every man is brutish in his knowledge," that "his understanding is naturally darkened, being alienated from the light of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart," Eph. iv. 18. Nay, the whole scripture supposes this; and the letter of revelation alone does not take this blindness away; wherefore our beloved apostle prays that God would bestow upon the Ephesians the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, that the "eyes of their understanding" might be "enlightened" for practical purposes. No, there is no proud illuminated monument remaining or surviving the fall to which we can cling, and of which we can boast. It is no longer in man to direct his steps.

*"Tales sunt hominum mentes quales Pater ipse
Jupiter auctiferas lustravit lumine terras." **

But we are told that our circumstances are so much improved by the gospel that, whatever was the case formerly, this is no longer true, as it relates to refined Christianity. Against this refuge of lies I quote a passage from a very celebrated bishop of the establishment:—

"What the eye is to the body," says he, "reason or understanding is to the soul; as says the apostle: 'The eyes of the understanding (*της διανοίας*, the faculty of discernment) being enlightened.' The eye, then, is framed in such a manner as to be capable of seeing, and reason in such a manner as to be capable of knowing; but the eye, though ever so good, cannot see without light; and reason, though ever so perfect, cannot know without instruction. The eye indeed is that which sees, but the light is the cause of its seeing. Reason is that which knows, but instruction is the cause of its knowing; and it would be as absurd to make the eye give itself light, because it sees

* Man should not boast of his mental capacities, for he can understand no more than God gives him from day to day.

by the light, as to make reason instruct itself because it knows by instruction. The phrase, therefore, 'light of reason,' seems to be an improper one, since reason is not the light, but an organ for the light of instruction to act upon. And a man may as well take a view of things upon earth in a dark night by the light of his own eye, as pretend to discover the things of heaven in the night of nature by the light of his own reason; nor do we derogate from the perfection of reason when we affirm that we cannot know without instruction, any more than we derogate from the perfection of the eye when we deny that it has the power of seeing in the dark. Christ only, who is the Sun of Righteousness, has in himself the perfection of light, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; the perfection of reason, therefore, is to be able to receive out of his fulness, to receive the instruction of wisdom."*

Can any thing be more lucid than this passage, scripture only excepted? "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Before this light, prejudices and prepossessions, which pervert the judgment, will flee. By the gospel process of heart-sanctification our passions and appetites will be subdued; in "God's light we shall see light;" we shall have a right judgment in all things, shall have that "unction that teacheth all things"—a spiritual mind. Hence we come to these conclusions, that just opinions must come from a renewed mind, evangelical observations from evangelical principles, gracious discourse from a gracious heart. "Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be so." "If," then, "any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." From this fountain of wisdom, from the blessed word of eternal light and truth, from your personal experience, and from the open volume of the world, you, my brethren, may be learned too, even without the advantages of an extensive library; here you may "read, mark, observe, and learn," what purblind nature never can impart, what neither heathen nor Christianized philosophy can teach you: then, with a benevolent mind, impart to sinners your observations in the same spirit of godly simplicity as your predecessors have done, who were taught in the same happy school, and whose works remain to us for our instruction and assistance. May the Lord "give you understanding in all things."

LECTURE VIII.

ON PROPOSITIONAL DISCOURSES.

THE mode of discussion which, for the sake of distinction, I call *propositional*, differs very materially from that which formed the subject of our last lecture; for, although the divisions in the observational method are in fact so many general propositions, they are as the term *observation* intimates, restricted to what is obvious or generally admitted, and require only to be stated, amplified, and improved. But the class of propositions now to be considered are such as embody statements of truth which, on account of their importance, or the opposition made to them, require to be established, supported, and defended. While, therefore, a single discourse may advantageously comprise many *observations*, a single *proposition* may form the basis of a whole discourse or even a series of discourses. The term *division* is consequently less applicable to our purpose in reference to this species of

* Bishop Horne, on Eph. i. 18.

sermonizing than to any of the others, and my remarks and examples will be directed chiefly to the elucidation of the qualities which should distinguish this mode of discussion, in the management of which the following rules will, I think, be found to include all that is essential :—

1. This kind of discourse admits of no formal or extended explication, either of the sense of the text, or of its terms, idioms, figures of speech, &c. In explication we treat of the text, divide and discuss it; in proposition we adhere to the general doctrine or subject to be discussed, as stated in the preacher's *own words*; but, if such statement contain any term of doubtful import, such term should at the beginning be explained, and that as briefly as possible.

2. A proposition may be taken in its *whole* or *entire sense*, and the discourse simply divided into paragraphs, distinguished by the particular nature of their separate arguments, and numbered or not as convenience may dictate.

3. The doctrine, theme, or proposition, may be divided into a convenient number of propositions, sometimes two, sometimes three, or more; but a great number is embarrassing and destructive of simplicity; therefore they should be limited as much as the nature of the argument will permit.

4. As they should be few in number, so they should be expressed in clear, perspicuous language, and in as few words as possible.

5. The several propositions (if more than one) must express the whole sense of the doctrine propounded at the outset, and no more.

6. They must be placed in due order, so that they naturally fall under 1, 2, or 3, and have a just dependence on one another. This will prevent a vicious mixing of arguments. For instance, were I insisting on *benevolence*, I take my first argument from the inward satisfaction which a benevolent temper affords, my second from the obligation which the example of Christ lays upon us, and my third from its tendency to procure us the good-will of all around us. My arguments are good, but I have arranged them improperly; for my first and third are taken from considerations of interest, internal peace, and external advantages; and between these I have introduced one which rests wholly on duty. I should have kept those classes of argument which are addressed to different principles of human nature separate and distinct.*

7. The arguments should be solid, the proofs clear, the citations conclusive, the examples striking. This rule condemns all sorts of dishonest methods, all sophistry to gain a point.

8. If the heads of discussion be numerous, they can only be considered one by one: and the student would do well to select and write down against each, such articles of evidence as he himself conceives, and such as eminent authors have judged the most suitable. The preacher should exercise his own mind, in the first place, in choosing topics; then examine how far authors on the subject concur with him, and what addition they make to his selection.

9. Evidence as to degree or quantity should be suited to the occasion, whether the occasion be ordinary or extraordinary. For a familiar address I would recommend *select* and *diversified* views of evidence, rather than an accumulation of all that can be collected. But, if the occasion be *extraordinary*, the evidence must be more extensive.

10. The place, or more properly the people, must be considered.† If the congregation in general be illiterate, nothing must be offered but what is

* Blair's Lectures.

† See 7th Topic.

plain, popular, and scriptural : but a well-informed congregation may have more abstruse evidence presented to them. Of whatever class the congregation be, technical terms must not be employed. The end will be best answered by plain and ordinary words, such as every one understands.

11. The conclusion, or peroration, should be animated and powerful, and worthy of the arguments advanced. See Lecture on *Perorations*.

According to these rules, propositional discourses should mainly consist of *evidence* and *reasoning* in support of the sentiments which the propositions affirm. I shall therefore make no apology for offering the following remarks on the nature of evidence in general.

Evidence is that which convinces us of the truth of any subject or thing exhibited for our notice or belief.

1. Universal nature evinces a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. "The heavens declare the glory of God," &c., Ps. xix. 1—6. There can be no rational denial of this evidence.

2. The word of God is one complete system of evidence to the truth, faithfulness, and love of God.

3. The spirit of God in all his operations is a Spirit of evidence to a good man, proving his state before God, and testifying to him what the truth is respecting Christ and spiritual things.

4. Human evidence is the testimony borne by men to any fact as, for instance, in a court of law ; when this is good and complete, the case is said to be made out, or proved. In civil society when a man testifies to a matter of importance, he assigns reasons why you should believe him. In experimental philosophy the evidence is furnished by the experiments performed. In matters of reasoning, the result turns upon the preponderance of evidence for or against the proposition.

5. In all moral evidence, much depends on the character of him who professes to furnish proof.

The learned Mr. Crabbe says : "The EVIDENCE is whatever makes *evident* ; the TESTIMONY is that which is derived from an individual, namely, *testis*, the witness. Where the *evidence* of our own senses concurreth with the *testimony* of others, we can have no ground for withholding our assent to the truth of an assertion, and this is increased by the *testimony* of many. The evidence is applied to that which is moral or intellectual : the proof is employed mostly for facts. All that our Saviour did and said were *evidences* of his divine character, which might have produced faith in the minds of men, even if they had not such numerous miraculous proofs of his power."

Considering the state of things, as they exist in this world, evidence is requisite for every thing of importance, and ought to be furnished as far as possible. Yet, on the other hand, men ought not to be sceptical and unreasonable.

The sources of evidence are of course various, according to the nature of the truth to be supported. Mathematical truth can be established only by demonstration, but moral truth requires evidence corresponding with its nature. God has not thought fit to render his truths in general capable of mathematical demonstration. If he had done so, there would have been no room for the exercise of our faith. But if we can attain to *moral certainty*, in addition to the nine other kinds of evidence about to be mentioned, it is all that can be required by the most determined sceptic. It is true a juggler may deceive our eyes, and a ventriloquist our ears ; an artful sophist may confuse our understanding ; there may in some cases, be such obstruc-

tions in ourselves as to prevent our real acquaintance with things ; yet these exceptions do not apply to a thousand things that are still self-evident, and which must be received as moral certainties ; as, " Whatever acts, has a being." " Nothing has no properties." " A part is less than the whole." " Nothing can be the cause of itself ;" that is, " no creature can be the cause of itself." These are called axioms, maxims, or first principles, and are the very foundation of all knowledge and reasoning, on which account they have by some been thought to be innate propositions, or truths born with us.* Leslie has reduced the truth of divine revelation to a moral certainty, except to those who hate the truth and are wilfully blinded. Bishop Kidder has shown such evidence of Christ's being the true Messiah that it cannot be rejected except by a prejudiced Jew, who has already, before he reads, resolved to receive no kind of evidence.† But in some cases evidence may amount to a moral certainty to ourselves which we may not be able to communicate to others with the same force. The believer has the evidence in himself. " I know," says Paul, " in whom I have believed." No moral certainty can be greater.‡

I shall not attempt to describe every sort of evidence. This would of itself fill a volume, and the subject is worthy of some able pen to set it forth in all its length and breadth, in all its bearings and varieties, which would serve the cause of divine truth as much as a similar work on forensic testimony has benefited our courts of justice. The following brief notice of the principal kinds of evidence may, however, be useful:—

1. I begin with the evidence derived from *testimony*. When we can adduce the testimony of good men in a case in which they were liable to no mistake, this will be acknowledged of great weight. If this kind of evidence were not admitted, we must at once discredit all narratives and historical statements whatsoever. The apostle Peter appeals to it : " To him give all the prophets witness ;" yea, and the apostles too ; for three of them relate his transfiguration ; the eleven were witnesses of his resurrection, &c. We see the use of this kind of evidence in West on the Resurrection, and in the Trial of the Witnesses.

2. We have the evidence of *authority* : " Thus saith the Lord." In our judicial courts, great weight is given to the opinions of learned men upon any particular point. Surely, then, we may avail ourselves of the authority of him who is the " God of truth." We have before hinted that the scriptures, which we assume to be the word of God, are a complete system or body of evidence to the truth as it is in Jesus ; but then these scriptures must be quoted fairly, and interpreted justly. Honest *intentions* are not sufficient in this case, though a mind intent upon truth wherever it is found, with honesty of design to promote the glory of God and the good of men, and not vainly aiming at conquest over a rival in debate, will not be greatly misled. We must acquaint ourselves with the true design and sense of the passages we quote, and must show that such passages are really applicable to the point. Theological writers, of course, make frequent

* Watts's Logic, p. 179.

† Dr. J. P. Smith has lately produced an elaborate work on this subject.

‡ " I appeal to the common judgment of mankind whether the human nature be not so framed as to acquiesce in such a moral certainty as the nature of things is capable of, and, if it were otherwise, whether that reason which belongs to us would not prove a burden and a torment to us, rather than a privilege, by keeping us in a continual suspense, and thereby rendering us perpetually restless and unquiet."—*Bishop Wilkins*.

appeals to this description of evidence, and generally make it a distinct article of proof.

3. The evidence of *experience*. By this word I mean what Dr. Ash terms that which "enters into a man's own *feelings*," the consciousness of what passes in his own mind. Low as is the state of our mental powers, yet our actual experience cannot be suspected. Paul adverts to this very article in Romans vii. ; he found by experience that sin, like a law, domineered over him, so that he could not do the things that he would. He also appeals very strikingly to the experience of the Gentile converts: "What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" Peter appeals to it: "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." We may also appeal to the experience of other persons whose cases have been similar, as well as to our own, as Blair has well proved in his sermon on 1 Cor. vii. 31, and on Prov. xiv. 13. Jeremiah (ii. 19) makes a powerful appeal to the Jewish nation: "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy own backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see (by thy own experience) that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." What is the "witness of the Spirit with our spirits," but a matter of experience? and I cannot but think it a good argument in favour of divine revelation that we actually feel the truths there revealed to be true and righteous altogether. There is this great advantage to be noticed in this kind of evidence, that wherever it is available it cannot fail to produce conviction. "When I sent you out," says Christ to his disciples, "without purse or scrip, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nay." Their experience proved a special Providence where ordinary rules of prudence were interdicted.

4. The evidence arising from *comparison* and *contrast*. The shortest way to explain this point is by a reference to scripture. Deut. xxxii. 18: "Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." Jer. xiv. 22: "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" Let us institute comparisons with our enemies on every point, and follow them up closely. Let us press this advantage with all its force. A most active and ingenious preacher has published a course of lectures on this subject.*

It might seem that this article is too nearly allied to the topic of *analogy* to be made a distinct article. Every person is at perfect liberty to place it wherever he pleases, so that he make use of it judiciously; but, for my own part, I wish to have it kept distinct.

5. Of *probability*. Sometimes a point does not appear absolutely certain, yet there is such strong probability in its favour that a wise man will hesitate to reject it. On the other hand, mere probability is not sufficient to justify an entire dependence; it is to be regarded only as an auxiliary in evidence. When Paul pleaded before Agrippa, he used this argument for the resurrection:—"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Thus with respect to a *revelation* of God's mind to men, which infidels so boldly and audaciously deny, we offer this evidence among others—the *probability* that a good and gracious Being would not leave his creatures destitute of such a blessing, a blessing of all others the most important and necessary, that, as God so graciously supplies the wants of our bodies, so he will not deny us food for

* Dr. Collyer on Scripture Comparisons.

our souls. It is said that Socrates and Plato both expressed their hope to this effect. The various pretensions of impostors to revelations from God, and the avidity with which many believed them, shows that mankind had hopes of such a blessing.

6. The evidence of our *senses*, particularly of *hearing* and *seeing*. Thus St. John, in his First epistle: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, we declare unto you." St. Peter: "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty, and we heard the voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son." Now, this evidence to the Messiahship of Christ was to them clear and decisive, and nothing is wanting to make it evidence to us, but proof of the veracity of the apostles. Whatever comes under our own sight and hearing amounts to the evidence of *sense*. We see the bad effects of sin daily. We also witness the efficacy of the gospel, as well as hear our neighbours testify to its good effects. Thus we have the evidence of sense that the gospel is worthy of all acceptance. When this evidence can be adduced, it possesses the advantage of being strictly popular; and there are many suitable occasions for its employment.

7. Nearly allied to the foregoing is the evidence derivable from admitted or unquestionable fact. Whenever this can be properly used, it must not be neglected, for indeed it supersedes the necessity of any other. The Sanhedrim, before which Peter and John were brought, beholding the man who was healed standing with the apostles, could say nothing against the miracle, Acts iv. 14. The excellency of Paul's ministry bore the evidence of fact: "For the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord;" "Ye are our epistle," &c. But here we must be careful not to mistake plausible pretences and appearances for facts. Joseph's brethren exhibited a bloody coat to their father, to prove that some beast had destroyed Joseph; but here a vile deception was practised upon the good man.

8. The evidence of *analogy* or *resemblance*. This also is a popular class of evidence, and one that is frequently recurred to in the scriptures; but still it is only auxiliary; there is nothing conclusive in it; it only adds weight where more solid evidence can be furnished. Paul seems to use this, Rom. vi. 5: "For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." If the grub-worm seems to perish, but in the spring is re-animated, and bursts forth an elegant butterfly, why may not our body be re-animated in a nobler form, when the winter of the grave is passed? But this evidence may in some cases be carried a little further than *probability*. The order and frame of nature, or of that state of things which we know to exist, appear to be so constituted as to teach by analogy a great number of things which are in themselves remote from our comprehension. The work of the Spirit is therefore compared to the wind, the work of grace in the heart to seed sown, &c. Bishop Butler's Analogy is written on this principle.* However, we must be cautious in the use of this topic. The imagination may create analogies which have no foundation, and thus lead us to false conclusions.

9. Of *inference* and *induction*. Thus, I think, Jesus Christ inferred the doctrine of the resurrection, Matt. xxii. 31, 32, from Jehovah's declaration to Moses, Exod. iii. 6. The continuance of a superintending Power over the patriarchs, beyond the terms of their natural lives, gives just

[* The study of Butler's work will show the incorrectness of this general statement.]

reason to conclude that the divine designs will terminate in a resurrection.* Again, a just and holy God will certainly make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. But we do not see that difference uniformly made in this world; for often the wicked triumph, and the good man perishes. Therefore there must be a future state, and a judgment to come, when this difference shall be made. If we see a cottage in a wilderness, we conclude some man has been there and built it; as St. Paul says: "Every house is builded by some man," Heb. iii. 4. If I survey the heavens and the earth, these furnish evidence to my reason, which infers from them the existence of an eternal and great Power that produced them.

What is more particularly termed *reasoning*, principally consists in inferring or deducing one thing from another, which requires to be conducted with discrimination, and upon principles which appeal at once to common sense. Reason itself is defined to be "that power by which we discern that a relation belongs to two ideas, on account of our having found that these ideas bear certain relations to others, which we call third ideas; or that power which enables us, from ideas that are known, to find out such as are unknown; and without this power of drawing inferences, we never could proceed a single step beyond first principles, or intuitive axioms, in the discovery of any truth whatever."† Thus reason teaches us to infer the excellence of the divine government from the perfection of God. As, for instance: God is righteous; therefore, though his acts may be to us mysterious, yet no unrighteous act can proceed from him. The truth of this inference is obvious. Hence the plea of Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yet, judging only from partial views of his dispensations, very unjust inferences are sometimes drawn. Thus Job's friends thought that he could not be a good man because the Lord so sorely afflicted him; but this was not a just conclusion, because in the divine administration afflictions are often sent for trial and discipline, rather than as marks of divine displeasure.

This inferring or deducing one thing from another being of great importance, it appeared necessary to the ancients to establish some rules for common observance. Accordingly, the science of logic was introduced by Aristotle, who flourished at the same time with the prophet Malachi; and it is astonishing how little improvement has since taken place upon his ideas. The elements of his plan were, 1. An introduction; 2. The proposition; 3. The demonstration; 4. The conclusion. Let this plan be compared with those of modern date, and the resemblance will be evident.

I have alluded to the name of Malachi, as contemporary with Aristotle, and it is remarkable that the principles of ratiocination are more strongly marked in Malachi than in any other prophet; and since it were too much to suppose that he knew any thing of Aristotle, it may serve to show us that there was in that age an inclination or leaning towards a point of order in discussion.

By the system of Aristotle, with its subsequent improvements by Dr. Watts and others, the art of reasoning has been reduced to what are called *sylogisms*, the most simple of which consist of three propositions, so connected that the last of the three necessarily follows from the two former; the first and second being granted, the conclusion must be granted also, as in the following case:—

* This is most ably defended in Witsius, vol. i., p. 297, English ed. 1803; also, see Manton, vol. iii., part 2, p. 80; and Romaine against Warburton.

† Ryland's Contemplations, vol. i., p. 83, &c.

Our Creator must be worshipped ;
 God is our Creator ; therefore
 God must be worshipped.

But there is too much formality for all useful purposes in this exhibition. The first proposition may very well be dispensed with, and then we have two propositions only, an antecedent and a consequent ; as,

God is our Creator ; therefore
 God must be worshipped.

This is far more simple and equally adequate for all the purposes of argument. In fact, this method is constantly employed by us when reasoning on any subject in common conversation, or without an intentional reference to form. This natural process of reasoning has been allowed, indeed, by logicians, to have a place in their system, because, with all their fondness for their own technical modes and figures, they could not deny that it is at least possible for us to reason sometimes as in truth we always reason. Their only resource, therefore, was to reduce this natural process to their own artificial method, and to give it a name which might imply the necessity of this reduction before the reasoning itself could be considered worthy of that honourable title. They accordingly supposed that the proposition technically wanting was understood in the mind of the thinker or hearer, and therefore termed the reasoning an *enthymeme* : it was, they said, a truncated or imperfect syllogism. Perhaps they would have expressed themselves more accurately if they had described their own syllogism as, in its relation to the natural process of our thought, a cumbrous and overloaded enthymeme ; for not only does it render the process of arriving at truth more circuitous, by forcing us to employ three propositions instead of the two only which nature directs us to use, but it assumes, as the first stage of that reasoning by which we are to arrive at any truth, our previous knowledge of that particular truth, the major proposition being the conclusion itself under another form. Suppose, for instance, in order to prove that John is a sinner, I do not refer to any particular act of transgression of which he is guilty, but draw up my accusation by the major of a syllogism, thus :

All men are sinners ;
 John is a man ; therefore
 John is a sinner.

If the mind really attached any meaning to my major proposition, it must at that very moment have felt as completely that John was a sinner as after I had pursued him technically through the minor and conclusion. Men are displeased with the rehearsal of what is no ways necessary, and only serves to lengthen discourse or create obscurity. The great secret in reasoning is, therefore, so to frame and put together our thoughts as to give all the bearings of an argument their due force, and at the same time allow the imaginations of our hearers their full play. This gives to their minds a pleasure not unlike that which we may experience in the composition of our discourses, and insensibly leads them into our views and course of reasoning.*

We have been necessarily led to refer to the formulæ of the schools, though I have already pleaded for entire relief from them. The form is valuable only so far as it contains the substance, and, if we can extract the

* Vide latter end of 16th Topic. "Comparing things assimilates to reasoning," &c. It will also be useful to refer to the 12th and 19th Topics, and to weigh the force of what has already been said on the interrogative system.

essence of argumentation from a careful examination of principles, we may abandon the technicalities of logic to those who are wedded to them. Suppose, for instance, that you had a younger brother, whose unsteady conduct gave you pain, how would you endeavour to convince him of his errors, and to correct his conduct? Suppose that he has conceived a disgust, not only of religion, but also of his business and the regulations of the family,—has addicted himself to pleasure,—is profligate, idle, and extravagant,—and, having become embarrassed, and sickening at his prospects, is about to seek relief from want and disgrace in voluntary exile. How, I say, would you address your discourse to him? Let nature speak. Would you apply to your books for instruction? or would you endeavour to recollect some example of a speech that Cicero has left to the learned world? Certainly not. You would say, “O my brother, what has religion done to offend you? What makes your home and business irksome? Home is the delight of the wise, and business the proper occupation and companion of happiness. You see that these things are so in your mother, and your sisters. What happiness did we once enjoy! and, were it not for the pain that your conduct inflicts, our family circle were happiness still, and in this happiness you once participated; but now your pleasures are your ruin; you see every day that God has connected licentiousness and misery together, and whither can you go? What country will yield a balm for a troubled conscience? What waters can yield you solace? Or can you leave remembrance behind? But, in immediately returning to a sober life, peace, to which you are a stranger, will return with you. You know our unchanged affections, our readiness to forget and forgive, and you have too often heard of the divine compassion to despair of Heaven’s forgiveness. This moment return, and my happiness shall be, as yours will be, complete.”

But, you will say, where is the argument in all this? Surely the argument is in the language of nature, in representation, expostulation, and entreaty; and allow me to say that however varied cases or circumstances are, or however diversified texts of scripture may be, there is a free and natural way of arguing upon them as well as a learned one, and that it is better suited to the generality of hearers. It is this free and familiar kind of argument, adapted to every day practice, which I wish you particularly to study. *Ex professo* argumentation has its place, but not in general use. Of Robert Hall it is observed, by Foster, “that he had much, very much, of the essence and effect of reasoning, without its forms;” this, it is added, will be unqualified praise. Certainly we have a good riddance of the cumbersome and barbarous technicalities formerly used; but there is a natural and easy logic which may pervade a discourse in such a manner that it shall evidently have more of the consistence of a contexture than of an accumulation. “The train of thinking may preserve a link of connexion by the dependence of the following thought on the foregoing, that succeeding thought not only being just in itself, and pertinent to the matter in hand, but being so still more especially in virtue of resulting, by obvious deduction, or necessary continuation, from the preceding, thus at once giving and receiving force by the connexion.” It would greatly redeem the credit of preaching if such concatenation of thought were always carefully preserved; the intelligent part of our auditories would pay a just tribute of praise to the speaker, and even the lower classes would have argument nearer to their comprehension than what is usually offered to them.

Argumentative preaching may, however, be carried to excess, and it will be well to let the following things be constantly borne in mind:—

1. It is not to be imagined, by our enlarging on this subject, that our Christian assemblies are to be erected into forums of debate ; this would be a perversion of our design altogether.

2. We are not to assume that our congregations are either under error or unbelief, at least before evidence is produced.

3. In ordinary cases we are not to say all that can be said.

4. We are not to affect a high tone of superiority, as though we alone understood how to contend for the truth, or we alone had correct views of the subject.

5. We are not to pretend to furnish evidence of those absolute mysteries which are to be found in the scriptures, and which no uninspired man can explain.

6. We are not, in ordinary cases, to attempt to bring all the evidence that a subject is capable of, nor to run into any long trains of reasoning, which ordinary minds cannot follow ; this is sure to fall into a dry style, and will usually be quite unintelligible. Some few preachers indulge in this to a sad excess. I admit, however, that, should some adversary assail us with such metaphysical runs, it would be right that he should have a reply in his own way, and that of the most acute kind ; but the plain gospel preacher has no business of this nature (*sui operi*, every man to his work) ; nay, instead of helping, by this means he might injure the good cause. We must learn what ought not to be said. An able and experienced barrister does not much regard all the special pleadings that are put into his brief, but calculates what is likeliest to affect a jury of plain men. Just so a judicious preacher will manage this difficult case. And, besides, let the preacher be aware that if, in an ill-judged attempt to pursue consecutive matters, he should have the misfortune to lose some link of his scheme, then disgrace must follow, and he would feel himself reproved, though his audience might be silent. He “loses stays,” as the sailors say, and exposes the masts and ship to danger ; or he “begins what he is not able to finish” well.

Argumentation for the establishment of any truth may be conducted by a train of reasoning in refutation of the sentiments by which it is opposed, and by direct evidence in support of the truth itself. Both these may be prosecuted in the same discourse, and either under separate heads or together, according to circumstances. A minister of the gospel ought to be of a peaceable and conciliating temper ; he ought to be chiefly concerned in establishing and enforcing the truth ; yet he ought also to know how to refute false opinions and unfounded statements, because sometimes his duty requires him to do so.

“There are three ways of refuting objections :—the first, and when admissible the best, is to aim only at a full and clear exhibition of the truth ; the next is to interweave objections and answer them indirectly and without formality ; the last is to state them in form, and refute them by distinct arguments. When this last course is adopted it requires the following precautions :—

“1. State no objections that are too trivial to deserve notice. We may waste our time by refuting what needs no refutation, as well as by proving what needs no proof.

“2. If objections are really weighty, never treat them as insignificant. Without evasion, without distortion, state them fairly and fully—give them all the weight to which they are entitled.

“3. Take care that your answers be complete and decisive, so as not to leave the impression that you have raised an adversary whom you have not strength to withstand.

"4. State no objections in which your hearers are not interested. Though weighty, and capable of complete refutation, if they are such as are never likely to be known without your help it is worse than trifling to discuss them. The physician deserves no praise for his skill in devising an antidote for poison which his own temerity had administered. What preacher would repeat the language of obscene and profane men with a view to condemn it? No more does Christian propriety allow us to state artful and blasphemous cavils against religion for the same end. Even when such cavils are decent in manner, they should not be obtruded on common minds without urgent necessity. Such minds may understand an objection and remember it, when the force of a reply is not seen, or is forgotten. It is from the learned labours of Christian advocates for the truth, not from their own investigations, that sceptics have

— 'Gleaned their blunted shafts,
And shot them at the shield of truth again.'

"5. Avoid acrimony as both unchristian and unwise. Meet an objector with ingenuousness and kindness. Take no advantage of verbal inadvertence, nor charge on him the admission of consequences which he disavows.

"6. Seldom or never oppose sects by name."*

Completely to refute some errors calls for no ordinary share of learning and talent. The following plain rules may, however, be found useful :—

1. The preacher may object to his opponent's *statement*, either as to the terms in which it is expressed, as loose and indefinite, or as conveying ideas which are not admitted; or, if he allow the terms, he may object to the manner of arranging them, as tending to give a false view of the subject in dispute, or as throwing obscurity around a subject which would be otherwise plain.

2. He may object altogether to the *doctrine* contained in such statement, as not substantiated, or as leading to pernicious consequences.

3. He may object that the doctrine was, in its promulgation, never attended with the divine blessing.

4. He may object to the temper and spirit in which such statements are made and supported, as being nothing more than the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds. 1 Tim. vi. 5.

5. He may allow the validity of the argument used by an adversary, while he denies the inference deduced from it, and even draws a different conclusion from the premises.

6. He may distinguish and show the inapplicability of the rule laid down to determine the matter in hand, or that the rule is inadequate to the object, and that other matter must be brought into the statement before any case can be made out.

7. He may limit the sense of the statement, or the rule laid down, so as to prevent so general and broad an application.

8. He may show that his opponent proves too much, and that therefore his arguments are rendered nugatory.

9. He may show that the doctrine is totally repugnant to the general tenour of scripture. And, as this is the shortest, so also is it the best refutation of any error; for the scripture must be the final arbiter.

* Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching, by Dr. Porter, president of the Theological Seminary at Andover, United States. This work will well repay a careful perusal.

10. A preacher may cite a number of particulars of the bad effects which the false doctrines would produce. "A tree is known by its fruits." Pure effects commonly follow pure doctrine. Such particulars would be something like a bill of indictment against the error. We are aware this may be retorted upon some preachers; for, though it is true that pure effects flow from pure doctrines, yet we have lamentable instances of pure doctrines being professed without producing any purifying effects: still these are only accidental, and the impropriety cannot be justly charged on the doctrine, but upon human weakness and hypocrisy. However, a caution is here offered, that we take care that no such charges be justly alleged against us. A bad man may defend the truth, but a good man loves the truth which he defends, and he will be revered and heard with attention.

11. The rule laid down in Claude, and repeated by Simeon, is to establish the truth in the first place, and then refute, &c.; or *vice versâ*. I do not find either of these schemes strictly followed. They seem to be paper plans, chiefly theoretical. I could scarcely single out a discourse constructed either way; but, rather, I find the refutation of error and the establishment of truth to go on quietly together, mutually concurring to one end. Of this kind I shall give an example from Robert Hall, wherein he successfully refutes Atheists, who hold matter to be eternal, that this world ever was what it now is, without any recognition of a Creator or admission of a governing power. The text is Exod. iii. 14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The passage is from the second general division of the discourse. The arguments employed are treated at great length in Abernethy on the Divine Attributes, in Dwight's Theology, and in Paley's Natural Theology; but the compressed, judicious, and energetic manner in which Hall has presented them affords a fine specimen of reasoning.

WE PROPOSE TO DEMONSTRATE THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A BEING.

1. Something always must have existed, or nothing could have had an existence. To suppose the matter of this world, for example, to have arisen out of nothing, without any cause whatever, is evidently to suppose what is absurd and impossible.

2. Whatever exists of itself, and consequently from all eternity, can never cease to exist, and must be perfectly independent of every other being with respect to existence and the manner of its existence. Since it exists of itself, the cause and reason of its existence must, by supposition, be in itself, not in another; it must have, so to speak, a perpetual spring of existence, independent of the operation or will of all other beings. It exists by absolute necessity. It exists because it cannot be otherwise than it is; for whatever can be so is contingent, not necessary. Hence it is absolutely unchangeable, which is sufficient to prove that matter is not that eternal self-existent Being, because matter is undergoing continual changes, and instead of being unalterable, is perfectly passive and indifferent to all changes whatever.

3. The Being who always existed in and of himself must be an intelligent Being, or a Being possessed of reason and understanding; for these exist, and, since they could not arise out of nothing, they must have been produced by some efficient cause. But they could not have been produced by what was not intelligent. Reason and understanding could no more have been caused by what had none than matter could have arisen out of nothing. Take a lump of clay, or any part of inanimate matter, and ask yourselves whether it is not in the highest degree absurd to suppose that the power of remembering, of reasoning, of judging, should arise from that as a cause. It is just as possible that light should spring from darkness as a cause as that that which is incapable of thought should produce it. Whether the power of thinking may possibly be superadded to matter, is not the question at present: admitting that this were possible, it is plainly impossible that thought, or the power of thinking, should spring from inanimate matter as a cause. But, as there are many beings possessed of reason and understanding, there must have been at least, some one intelligent Being from eternity, or those thinking creatures could never have existed, since it is quite

as impossible that thought and intelligence should arise out of unconscious matter as that they should spring out of nothing.

As to the idea which some Atheists have pleaded for, of an eternal succession of finite beings, such as we witness at present, without supposing any original uncaused being, it is evidently inconsistent with reason and with itself; for it affirms that to be true of a part which it denies with respect to the whole; every particular being in the series, upon that supposition, depends on a preceding one, yet the whole depends upon nothing; as if it were affirmed that there could be a chain infinitely long, each link of which was supported by the rest, and so on in each instance, and yet the whole absolutely depended upon nothing. The difficulty of supposing a being beginning to exist without a cause is not at all lessened by supposing an eternal succession of such beings; for, unless there be some first Being on whom all the rest depend, it is evident the whole series hangs upon nothing, which is altogether as impossible as that any one in particular should. Hence it is evident there must have always been some one intelligent Being, whose existence is uncaused and absolutely eternal, unchangeable, and independent.

4. There is but one such Being. To affirm there is more than one is a contradiction in terms. No shadow of reason can be assigned for believing in a plurality of such Beings, because the supposition of only one accounts for all that we see much more satisfactorily than the supposition of more. That there is one underived, self-existent, eternal, and intelligent Cause of all things, must of necessity be allowed, in order to account for what we know to exist; but no reason can be assigned for supposing more. It is with the utmost propriety established as an axiom that we ought in no case to assign more causes than will account for the effects. The harmony and order of the universe, and the sameness and universality of the laws which pervade every part of it, as far as our knowledge extends, make it evident that it is the production of one intelligent Cause. Had it been the product of many, there would necessarily have been discrepancies, irregularity, and disorder in it, as the necessary effect of contrary plans and inclinations; at least, it would have been formed according to different systems, bearing the marks of their being the product of distinct authors; for we can find no two individuals if left entirely to themselves, who would build a house exactly upon the same plan, of the same size, and with the same ornaments. The fundamental laws of nature not only affect this globe which we inhabit, but are found to extend to the remotest bounds of the universe, as far as they have fallen under our observation, either by the naked eye or by telescopes. The compound substance of light, which illuminates our system, is found to extend to the regions of the fixed stars, immeasurably more distant from us than the sun. The laws of gravitation pervade every particle of matter, at least within the solar system, and, there is every reason to believe, throughout the whole universe. Such simplicity and uniformity in the laws of nature evince that they are the product of one and the same Intelligence.

Archbishop Tillotson furnishes a specimen of refutation on the same subject, which is so simple and forcible that it cannot fail to carry conviction to the commonest understanding. In combating the absurd hypothesis of Atheists that the world sprung from chance, he asks,

Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and not fail in one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground, before they would fall into an exact poem?—yea, or so much as make a good discourse in prose? And may not a little book as easily be made as this great volume of the world? How long might one sprinkle colours upon canvass with a careless hand before they would make the exact picture of a man (say of an Atheist)? And is a man easier to be made by chance than his picture? How long might twenty thousand blind men, who should be sent out from the remote parts of England, wander up and down before they would all meet upon Salisbury plain, and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. A man who sees Henry VII's chapel at Westminster might with as good reason maintain—yea, and much better, considering the vast difference between that little structure and the huge fabric of the world—that it was never contrived nor built by any man, but that the stones did by chance grow into those curious figures into which we see them to be cut and graven, and that the materials of that building, the stone, mortar, timber, iron, lead, and glass, happily met together, and ranged themselves into that delicate order in which we see them now, so closely compacted that it must be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world

think of the man that should advance such an opinion as this, and write a book in favour of it? If they would do him justice they ought to look upon him as mad. But yet he might maintain this opinion with a little more reason than any man can have to say that the world was made by chance, or that the first man grew out of the earth, as plants do now.

Much may be learnt on the subject of refutation from perusing the works of authors who have distinguished themselves for clearness of thought and strength of reasoning, perhaps more than from rules, though these also have their use. But particular care should be taken in studying the writings of such as are deficient in reference to the Christian temper, lest, while approving their arguments, you insensibly imbibe their spirit. Many good men have committed themselves here to a painful degree, and that too on subjects upon which Christians may safely agree to differ. In all disputation, and particularly theological disputation, it is of the utmost consequence to combine the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*, and to deal with adversaries fairly and honestly, imputing to them nothing which they themselves disavow.*

Propositional preaching is perhaps, in the direct form, better adapted for extraordinary occasions, in which ministers of learning and eloquence are usually called to officiate, than for the ordinary purposes of the Christian ministry. But, whether in the direct form of propositions or otherwise, argument or reasoning is indispensable. Doctrines must, by all preachers, be stated, proved, and defended. There is always, and every where, something to be proved. We cannot state or affirm a thing, but we must proceed to show (briefly at least) that the thing is true, or right, or desirable. For even all that part of a discourse called the persuasive must be grounded upon the truth, or equity, or eligibility, of the premises themselves, which afford a basis for argumentation. In such familiar instances, the formalities of reasoning may and ought to be dispensed with; but the essence of the argument must remain, and be diffused throughout the lecture or sermon. In the regular species of composition lately treated of, the middle part sustains the argument, and possesses the premises for the service of the third part. And, though the principles of reasoning are less apparent in some discourses, they are always existent, or supposed, or implied, or couched in some of the infinite varieties of language. Arguments suited to each kind will be supplied by the fertility of the mind in study, and those are especially to be preferred which arise from scripture fairly and justly interpreted.

In order to convey to you as clearly as I can what I mean by that free and familiar method of reasoning which I recommend, I shall now present you with some examples, which will prevent the necessity of further enlargement.

The following is from Wilberforce's admirable treatise on Christianity:—

There is one argument which impresses my mind with peculiar force. This is the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have been used in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation thereby afforded of its truth. The proof from prophecy,—from miracles,—from the character of Christ,—from that of his apostles,—from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity,—from the nature and the excellence of its *practical* precepts,—from the accordance between the doctrinal and practical systems of Christianity, whether considered each in itself or in their mutual relation to each other,—from other species of internal evidence afforded in the more abundance in proportion

* The following sermons afford valuable specimens of refutation:—Ancient Philosophy Refuted, Blair, vol. iii., serm. xix.; Modern Philosophy Refuted, Blair, vol. iv., serm. xi.; Objections against Family Prayer Refuted, Davies, vol. ii., serm. xxix.; False Candour Refuted and Exposed, Davies, vol. iii., serm. xlv.; a False Meaning of a Passage of Scripture Exposed, Blair, vol. ii., serm. lv.

as the sacred records have been scrutinized with greater care,—from the accounts of contemporary writers,—from the impossibility of accounting, on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity, for its early prevalence,—these, and other lines of argument, have all been brought forward and ably urged by different writers, in proportion as they have struck the minds of different observers more or less favourable. Now, granting that some obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world—though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed must, have been attempted to be laid—it seems, at least, to my understanding, morally impossible that *so many different species of proofs*, and all so strong, should have lent their *concurrent* aid, and have united their joint force, in the establishment of the falsehood. It may assist in estimating the value of this argument to consider upon how different a footing, in this respect, has rested every other religious system, without exception, which was ever proposed to the world, and indeed every other historical fact of which the truth has been at all contested.

Matters of fact are popular and easy. The following quotation from Bishop Sherlock's first discourse is of this kind, upon the pleas of natural religion, by which, I fear, hundreds of thousands are at this day deluded :—

If nature can instruct us sufficiently in religion, we have indeed no reason to go any where else ; so far we are agreed ; but whether nature can or no is in truth rather a question of fact than of mere speculation ; for the way to know what nature can do is to take nature by itself and try its strength alone. There was a time when men had little else but nature to go to, and that is the proper time to look into to see what mere and unassisted nature can do in religion. Nay, there are still nations under the sun who are, as to religion, in a mere state of nature ; the glad tidings of the gospel have not reached them, nor have they been blessed, or (to speak in modern phrase) prejudiced, with divine revelation, which we, less worthy of it, so much complain of. In other matters they are polite and civilized ; they are cunning artificers, and in many sciences not unskilful. Here then we may hope to see natural religion in its full perfection ; for there is no want of natural reason, nor any room to complain of prejudices and prepossessions : but yet, alas ! these nations are held in chains of darkness, and given up to the blindest superstition and idolatry. Men wanted not reason before the coming of Christ, nor opportunity nor inclination to improve it. Arts and sciences had long before obtained their just perfection ; the number of the stars had been counted, their motions observed and adjusted ; the philosophy, oratory, and poesy of those ages are still the delight and entertainment of this. Religion was not the least part of their enquiry. They searched all the recesses of reason and nature, and, had it been in the power of reason and nature to furnish men with just notions and principles of religion, here we should have found them ; but instead of them we find nothing but the grossest superstitions and idolatry, the creatures of the earth advanced into deities, and men degenerating and making themselves lower than the beasts of the field. Time would fail me to tell of the corruptions and extravagances of politester nations. Their religion was their reproach, and the service they paid to their gods was a dishonour to them and to themselves. The most sacred part of their devotion was the most impure ; and the only thing that was commendable in it was that it was kept as a great mystery and secret, and hid under the darkness of the night ; and, were reason now to judge, it would approve of nothing in this religion but the modesty of withholding itself from the eyes of the world.

This being the case wherever men have been left to mere reason and nature to direct them, what security have the great patrons of natural religion now that, were they left again to reason and nature, they would not run into the same errors and absurdities ? Have they more reason than those who have gone before them ? In all other instances nature is the same now that it ever was, and we are but acting over again the same part that our ancestors acted before us. Wisdom, and prudence, and cunning, are now what they formerly were : nor can this age show human nature in any one character exalted beyond the examples that antiquity has left us. Can we show greater instances of civil or political wisdom than are to be found in the governments of Greece and Rome ? Are not their civil laws still held in admiration ? And have they not a place allowed them still in almost all kingdoms ? Since then in nothing else have we grown wiser than the heathen world, what probability is there that we should have grown wiser in religion if we had been left, as they were, to mere reason and nature ? To this day there is no alteration for the better, except only in the countries where the gospel has been preached. What shall we say of the Chinese, a nation that

wants not either reason or learning, and in some parts of it pretends to excel the world? They have been daily improving in the arts of life, and in every kind of knowledge and science; but yet in religion they are ignorant and superstitious, and have but very little of what we call natural religion among them. And what ground is there to imagine that reason would have done more, made greater discoveries of truth, or more entirely subdued the passions of men in England, or France, or any other country in Europe, than it has in the eastern or southern parts of the world? Are not men as reasonable creatures in the east as in the west? and have they not the same opportunities of exercising and improving their reason too? Why then should you think that reason would do that now in this place which it never has been able to do in any time or place whatsoever?*

Now, though this reasoning is admirably close and conclusive, it is perfectly easy of comprehension: and, though common understandings lie under great disadvantages, yet it is by no means difficult to descend to their level if you will take the pains to do so. The whole of Bishop Sherlock's long discourse, from which the above is an extract, deserves to be studied. It is a melancholy fact that infidelity is fast spreading among the lower orders; in the Bishop's time it was confined to the higher. Bishops and great men, at that time, stood up against this gigantic enemy; but now ordinary preachers must understand the subject, being the nearest in rank of life with the infected party.

The following extract from the same author, on Gal. vi. 9, "Let us not be weary in well-doing," contains very familiar argument, is applicable to any worthy object, and may very fitly be addressed to students in divinity, who are often too impatient in their work.

Whenever hopes and expectations are raised beyond all probability of being answered in the event, they can yield nothing but uneasiness, anger, and indignation, against the protraction experienced; and yet who is to blame? not he that appointed means to an end, but he who understands this so little as to expect all at once, which is most unreasonable. Would you pity the husbandman should you see him lamenting his misfortune because he could not reap in the spring, when all the world knows the time of harvest is not till summer? The case is the same in all similar instances: if men anticipate the reward of their labour by the eagerness and impatience of their hopes, they will be disappointed indeed; not because their labour is vain, which in due time will bring its reward, but because their expectations are vain and unreasonable, and outrun the order of nature.

You see then of what consequence it is to us rightly to balance our expectations, and to adjust them to that natural course and order of things which Providence has established in the world. We may easily lose the fruit of our well-grounded hopes by giving ourselves up to the delusion of false ones. If we grow sick of our work because our untimely wishes are disappointed, we shall forfeit the reward which patient continuance in well-doing would in the natural course of things bring with it. And I take this to be the foundation and ground of the apostle's exhortation in the text, "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

This quotation constitutes a part of the introduction to the sermon; and it furnishes an instance of the possibility of occasionally adopting the argumentative style with good effect somewhat out of its usual place, thus justifying my observation that in some part of every discourse, as well as sometimes throughout, argument must be introduced.

The following specimen of plain argument is from Dr. Blair:—

An extensive contemplation of human affairs will lead us to this conclusion, that among the different conditions and ranks of men the balance of happiness is preserved in a great measure equal, and that the high and the low, the rich and the poor, approach in point of real enjoyment much nearer to each other than is commonly imagined. In the

* See Halyburton's masterly treatise on the Insufficiency of Natural Religion.

lot of man mutual compensations, both of pleasure and of pain, universally take place. Providence never intended that any state here should be either completely happy or entirely miserable. If the feelings of pleasure are more numerous and more lively in the higher departments of life, such also are those of pain. If greatness flatters our vanity, it multiplies our dangers. If opulence increases our gratifications, it increases in the same proportion our desires and demands. If the poor are confined to a narrow circle, yet within that circle lie most of those natural satisfactions which, after all the refinements of art, are found to be the most genuine and true. In a state, therefore, where there is neither so much to be wanted on the one hand, nor to be dreaded on the other, as at first appears, how submissive ought we to be to the disposal of Providence! How temperate in our desires and pursuits! How much more attentive to our principles and to improve our minds than to gain the doubtful and equivocal advantages of worldly prosperity, which in a moment may be overturned! But the refined pleasures of a pious mind are in many respects superior to the coarse gratifications of sense: they are pleasures which belong to the highest powers and best affections of the soul; whereas the gratifications of sense reside in the lowest regions of our nature. To the one the soul stoops below its native dignity; the other raises itself above itself. The one leaves always a comfortless, often a mortifying remembrance behind them: the other is reviewed with delight. The pleasures of sense resemble a pouring torrent, which, after a disorderly course, speedily runs out, and leaves an empty and offensive channel. But the pleasures of goodness resemble the equable current of a pure river, which enlivens the fields through which it passes, and diffuses verdure and fertility along its banks.

One example from Bishop Beveridge must close my quotations on this head. It is taken from his sermon on 2 Cor. v. 7, and is perfectly characteristic of the plainness and simplicity of the worthy author, who is sometimes compared to our invaluable commentator, Matthew Henry, being always at the level of the common people, though he was in fact a very learned man. In truth, I cannot but think that he is to be considered the wisest and cleverest man who can make all manner of subjects and all manner of ideas familiar to every capacity.* But let us hear the good bishop.

By faith it is that we perceive in what manner God governs, orders, and disposes of all and everything in this world. For by faith we may see him, the first cause, holding as it were the chain of all inferior or secondary causes in his hand, ranging and managing them all both severally and conjointly, so as to make them accomplish his will and pleasure in the world. By faith we see him overruling the counsels and ordering the affairs of all the kingdoms and nations upon earth, "stilling the raging of the sea, the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people." By faith we may behold him distributing the honours and dispersing the riches of this world, as he himself sees good, advancing one and depressing another, sometimes giving and then taking away the blessings of this world for reasons best known to himself; yea, by faith we may behold him interesting and concerning himself in the minutest things that are, "for are not two sparrows sold for one farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered." And if he looks after the sparrows, and numbers the very hairs of our head, what is there in the world that can be exempted from his care and providence? Nothing, certainly; and therefore by faith we cannot but behold him moving everything that stirs, working in everything that acts, influencing and disposing of everything that is, so as to make it conduce to his own glory. And if in particular we consider the great work of man's redemption, nothing can be so evident to our senses as that is to our faith, although accomplished many years ago; and believing we rejoice in his work.

These examples will, I hope, suffice to convey to you a just idea of free and popular discussion, and I must now request your attention to some specimens of regular propositional discourses. In my first example, the text itself forms a simple proposition, and the propositional *division* is not available though the preacher might, if he saw reason, even in such a case, announce his proposition in words embodying the sense of the text, after briefly explaining it. In the present case, the explanation of the text con-

* American Blair is remarkable for this skill in his Sermons on the Beatitudes,

stitutes the first part, and the body of the discourse comprises several distinct classes of argument in proof of the proposition. You will therefore observe that the *division* is in fact accommodational, though nothing is wanting to render it complete as a propositional discourse, but to throw the exposition into the exordium. It is on John xv. 5: "Without me you can do nothing."

I. State the sense of the expression. It is a universal and absolute truth (Acts xvii. 28); but I do not here mean to deny to men their natural or civil liberty, nor in a proper sense, their free-agency: I only mean to say that without divine grace man can perform no spiritual worship or service, much less can he work out his own salvation except God by his grace work in him both to will and to do those things that are necessary to salvation, being in himself too far lost for such a mighty work.

II. Produce some evidences of this truth. It accords with everything which we hear, see, and feel.

1. What we *hear*. The history of all nations is but the universal history of human depravity. All flesh has corrupted its way, and in its course of corruption the power of self-restoration is lost. Every attempt at the worship and service of God is degraded with carnal views; and man has no idea of salvation but from his own works. The Jews possessed the greatest advantages; they had the law, the prophets, and the ordinances of God, Rom. ix. 4, 5. Yet the law which they possessed "was weak through the flesh," Rom. viii. 3; and Israel who "followed after righteousness," obtained it not, Rom. ix. 31.

2. This truth agrees with what we *see*, and are daily compelled to observe. Men we everywhere behold who, being destitute of divine grace, and without God in the world, show that man naturally is still "without strength." Hence counsels and admonitions, promises and threatenings, neither allure nor terrify men to the exercise of true goodness. In this sense are not men dead in sin? Are men held back from the commission of consummate evil by any other means than that of an all-restraining power, and such co-operating aids as human laws afford? The gospel itself, in its purest form and most faithful administration, is to thousands but the administration of death.

3. This is again proved by what sincere Christians *feel* within themselves. Let any considerate believer compare the experience of St. Paul, candidly and faithfully stated in his seventh chapter to the Romans, with his own. Will he not find a law, a controlling power, that, "when he would do good, evil is present with him" to prevent the good that he meditates? Will not this fact be verified in all his most serious engagements, for a considerable time compelling him to deplore his situation in the most lamentable language of complaint? And if this be true in retired life, is it not as evidently true in the work of the ministry? Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God alone that gives the increase; nay, if God give not a door of utterance, the work of the ministry is but labour and sorrow.

III. We must *confirm* this truth by showing the unreasonableness of the contrary opinion. A thing that is contrary to all we *know*, *see*, and *feel*, must lie under a good deal of suspicion. If angels, now fallen, by the sovereign suspension of sustaining grace, were no longer able to stand,—if our first parents, created in righteousness and true holiness, were not able to preserve their first estate, because preserving grace was, for all-wise ends, withheld,—how can we, in our state of unspeakable weakness, continue in a course of well-doing? How can we account for the awful falls of God's dearest servants? Even with a manifest will to do good, and a general disposition and habit inclining that way, did not many of these excellent of the earth fall into scandalous sins? Into what extravagances and inconsistencies must men be betrayed, before they can deny the doctrine laid down? Must not man be a still more unaccountable creature than philosophy itself ever discovered him to be, if he could by the mere volition of the will save himself, and yet that will to determine in sin and self-destruction? Then is the real state of human nature worse a thousand-fold than ever it was represented by the men called *evangelical*. In short, the converse of our opinion would exhibit such a state of things as must be perfectly anomalous; and we must have a new revelation from Jehovah to enable us to account for any part of our knowledge and experience.

IV. This doctrine will not appear unreasonable if we reflect that the gift of grace is not the *only* sovereign act of God, either in nature or degree, that we are actually acquainted with. God is the sovereign author of every good and perfect gift throughout all nature. It is by his blessing that the means of animal life effect their end. It

only by a divine blessing that our understanding and reason become mature or maintain their seat; if that blessing be suspended, we fall into gross and palpable

errors, and even into derangement itself. It is by the divine blessing if we get rich, or if a state of poverty is not only rendered endurable, but often a state of considerable comfort. It is by the divine blessing that the earth yields her bounteous store to meet our wants; and, to the Christian, it is by a peculiar blessing that all things are made to work together for good. Is it then to be otherwise in grace? Can we do any thing pleasing to God without his help, who is always ready to help us in every time of need, and to make his strength perfect in our weakness?

V. We will furnish a proof or example that whatever is done aright in this world is done by divine grace. Our proposition is that we can do nothing without God; this is nearly the same thing as to say, We can do any thing and every thing with his help: and this perfectly accounts for many things which would be otherwise unaccountable. Paul says he was caught up to the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. The fact we are not allowed to dispute; but the manner is wrapt up in mystery. But was his elevation from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, and martyr of Jesus Christ, less remarkable? Did not divine grace raise this individual as much above his former self as heaven is higher than earth? If we were to fix upon an individual to whom we ought to apply the character of the "angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel in his hands," we should surely fix upon Paul. Whatever he said was evidently above himself. There was an elevating power that bore him above nature's bounds, while to his own moral conduct he could refer without a blush. The degree of his sanctification and devotedness to God was also very great. Now all this was the pure effect of *divine grace*: "Not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Then, without this grace, he would have been Saul of Tarsus still: he, without God's help, would have done nothing aright; but by divine strength he could do the extraordinary things his history relates.

VI. We must refer this matter to *testimony*. Here I would not exhibit the parade of triumph, but merely introduce two or three witnesses: Joshua tells the Israelites that they cannot serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 19. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 18. "No one can come unto me," saith Christ, "except the Father who hath sent me draw him," John vi. 44. "Without me you can do nothing," John xv. 5. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" Jer. xiii. 23. Eccles. ix. 11: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," &c. Jer. ix. 24: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," &c. Zech. iv. 6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."

Is it possible, if we consider the state of man as described in the scripture, that we can expect any spiritual service from him? He is represented as dead in trespasses and sins, as blinded by the god of this world, as brutish and ignorant, as polluted and defiled. The very age of miracles must return if we see such a lost being as man, in his own strength, serving God in spirit and in truth, improving his own state, and preparing himself for heavenly glory.

We are compelled therefore to conclude upon the truth of our proposition, that without God we can do nothing.

Where then is the arrogance of man? Though he exalt himself, like Lucifer, above the stars, yet shall he be brought down, Isa. xiv. 12—15. Where then are his free-will and moral ability? Are they not as a spider's web? "Why should you follow after vain things that cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain?" Are they any thing but refuges of lies? If the best of created beings cannot maintain a course of steady obedience without sustaining grace, how shall a polluted creature make one essay to serve God? If God's law be spiritual, extending to the very thoughts, requiring perfect love to its Author, what hope remains for you? "The youth shall faint and be weary, and the young man shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord" for strength shall succeed at last. In the present frame of your minds you forego the only remaining hope, and confirm your own inevitable ruin. O thou adorable Source of inexhaustible grace! ever refreshing, ever sufficient, be thou my strength and stay; enable me to do the divine will on earth even as it is done in heaven. Follow me through this wilderness state, that I may continually receive out of thy fulness grace for grace!

Suppose you were desirous of preaching on the text Phil. i. 6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Having briefly explained your text, your proposition might affirm the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, in support of which you might adopt a plan something like this:—

1. State the direct evidence of this doctrine from the testimony of inspiration.
2. Refer this article of faith to the general doctrine of God's faithfulness.
3. Describe this faithfulness in its several acts and properties, and bring all these to corroborate the doctrine in hand.
4. Show the fallacy of those objections which are commonly brought against it.

The following is an example of a propositional discourse on a practical subject, from Walker on James iv. 17: "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The exordium refers to the unfruitful lives of professors, their pretensions to comparative innocence, their self-deceptions, their partial obedience, &c. The text is then resolved into two propositions, as follows:—

I. That men sin, not only when they actually transgress the law of God, but also when they do not fulfil the duties which God requires of them to the utmost of their power.

If God were a severe task-master, an austere, selfish being,—if the service we rendered to him had no connection with our own happiness,—a deliberate calculation of our services, how far they might be rendered just sufficient to screen us from punishment, might be excusable; but when we consider that his laws are expressions of his goodness rather than of his sovereignty, and are intimately interwoven with our happiness, it were folly and ingratitude to contract our services. "His yoke is easy, his burden is light." If we love him, his commands will be met with pleasure; while a mean and servile spirit grudges the least thing that demands his exertions. If this matter therefore rested upon principle, we must not only act so as to escape punishment, but also so as to extend our service to the performance of all that we can do.

But the prescribed rule also goes to this. We are not only to depart from evil, but to do good, not only to cleanse ourselves from mere filthiness, but also to perfect holiness. Christ went about doing good: here was the active part. It was not enough that he did no sin; he became the Father's agent to do good to men, John ix. 2, 4; and, lest the impression of this point should not be sufficiently strong with regard to us, Christ directs many of his parables to this end, to show that God looks for actual positive good to be done by us. The rich man and Lazarus, the talents, the barren fig-tree, are of this kind; and the procedure at the last judgment turns upon active benevolence, Matt. xxv. From all we have observed, it is plain that omission of what we *ought to have done* incurs equal condemnation with positive transgression. What a frightful view does this give of the past part of our lives! Oh, what omissions!—tremendous account!

A most pressing application to the conscience follows under this first head.

II. That our guilt is more highly aggravated when we neglect the duties which are known to us, or when we decline opportunities of doing good, though we are convinced that it is our duty to embrace them.

He who does not seek for opportunities of doing good is a sinner; that is, he counteracts the obvious will of his Maker, and therefore shall be dealt with as an unfaithful servant, who has not applied his talents to the purposes for which they were given him. And, if this be the case, then surely the person who has a known opportunity of doing good, and yet wilfully neglects it, must contract greater guilt and be liable to severer punishment. If that man be culpable who is careless of doing all the good which by the exertion of his talents he is able to do, is not that man much more culpable who presumptuously omits to do good to which he has opportunities to solicit him? But why should I spend time in establishing so plain a truth, especially when it is already confirmed by the highest authority? Luke xii. 47. The only question that remains then is whether this be a supposition that can be made. Is it to be thought that any man is capable of deliberately resisting his own conviction, and of declining obedience to a law which he both knows and believes to be binding on him? I confess, indeed, that a superior being, if we could imagine him to be altogether unacquainted with human affairs, might reject this supposition as impossible. But surely we have no cause to object against the representation as forced or beyond the life. Our own observations, unless we have been extremely inattentive, cannot fail to furnish us with innumerable proofs of this determined neglect of duty. We need not go from home to bring our example from persons in high and public trust, who have been known to sacrifice the acknowledged interest and honour of a whole nation to their own private resentment or personal advantage. They are seen further for no

other reason but because they are placed higher. The importance of their station renders their faults more conspicuous, while a groaning community points out, as with a finger, the authors of its distress. But let each of us look into his own breast; and if conscience be not asleep it will say to us, as Nathan did to David, *Thou art the man!* Thou hast thyself neglected the fairest opportunities of doing good when thou hadst the strongest conviction that it was thy reasonable duty.

I mean not to pry into the secrets of your hearts, any more than to divulge the secrets of my own. But I speak from a thorough conviction that all of us pass too slightly over our omissions, even in the most serious review which we take of our own conduct. We are, alas! too fruitful in excuses, and too ready to gloss over our most culpable neglects with the specious colour of ignorance and incapacity. But God, to whom the night shineth as the day, knows the conviction of mind against which we sin, and our most dexterous arts of concealment cannot screen us from his penetrating glance. A just impression of this would prevent many fatal mistakes in our conduct. I have now, for example, an opportunity of doing good, and my conscience tells me that I ought to improve it. On the other hand, I have many strong temptations to neglect it. It would put me to much cost and trouble; it would involve me in a train of action against which my indolence revolts; or it would divert me from other employments more agreeable to my inclination. On which side shall I resolve? May I not manage so that the neglect shall escape the observation of my neighbour? or, if he should perceive it, may I not find some excuse to save me from his censure? Ah! but here is the check: The Searcher of hearts knows my present conviction. In vain shall I attempt to prevaricate with him. I may elude the censure of man, but I never can escape the judgment of God, who is greater than my heart, and knows all things. Such reasoning as this, if it were once to become habitual to us, would be a constant and powerful incitement to obedience, and would prevent the deep guilt of neglecting to do good when we know the extent and obligation of the law of God, and are convinced of our duty to comply with it.

Let us now, in conclusion, improve the subject.

1. This subject administers a sharp reproof to those who in any case attempt to evade their convictions of duty. For consider what kind of disposition this conduct betrays. Is it not evidently the disposition of a slavish and mercenary mind? You do no more in the service of God than you suppose to be necessary in order to escape eternal misery, and this is the only consideration that deters you from open transgressions of his law. You have therefore no regard for him, but only a concern for your own safety. Your plan of conduct is to offend God as far as you can without incurring his vengeance, so that any appearance of good about you is nothing more than the effect of a natural timidity. Do you thus requite the Lord? Does his goodness challenge no better return from you? Consider, I beseech you, the baseness and ingratitude of this conduct; and, if your hearts retain any spark of ingenuousness, you will surely be persuaded to a more faithful and generous conduct for the time to come.

2. This subject administers reproof also to the slothful and inactive servant, who rests contented with low attainments in religion. You perhaps flatter yourself that, although you are remiss in seeking opportunities of doing good, yet you are not unfaithful to any known obligation. But in this case you greatly deceive yourself; for is it not a known obligation that we should aim at as much perfection as possible? But you have renounced this desire altogether; in other words, you have deliberately left off the work to which our Saviour has expressly commanded us to devote ourselves; for are not these his very words, "Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect"?

3. This ought to quicken the zeal and activity even of those who have made the greatest progress in the ways of God. The declining state of religion calls loudly on those who are its real friends to exert themselves to the utmost in order to revive its influence in the world. Nothing will so effectually accomplish this object as your holy, persevering zeal. Be ye truly the salt of the earth, the light of the world, active, indefatigable in every work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The following, from Claude, is also strictly propositional, and, like the last, the whole sense of the text is divided into two parts:—

Rom. viii. 13: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

"From these words I shall raise the following propositions:—

I. That the damnation of sinners is inevitable.

II. That a life formed by the Spirit of holiness cannot fail to issue in eternal happiness.

I. That the damnation of sinners is inevitable. It is a lamentable thing, but such is the blindness of the natural understanding in men, that they seldom think of their latter end; if they did so, it would be impossible for them not to endeavour to avoid the eternal torments which await sinners after this life; self-love would urge them to this care, self-preservation would give energy to their endeavours, if the language of entreaty failed. Why will ye die?

1. The certainty of future punishment is clearly demonstrable.

1.) Consider, then, that man is a creature subject to a law. The light of a man's own conscience will discover an essential difference between vice and virtue, good actions and bad, Prov. xx. 27. Hence come the decisions of conscience, and the just judgments we make of one another's actions, approving or condemning them; for this necessarily proves that there is a common rule by which we acknowledge that all men ought to live. And this is a truth so natural to all men, that the most wicked of all, who endeavour to elude its application to themselves, do nevertheless acknowledge it when proposed generally and applied to other persons. Now, if there be a law common to all men, there must be a Supreme Judge, before whose tribunal they must appear to give an account of their actions; and, if there be a supreme tribunal to judge them, it necessarily follows that there are punishments ordained for the transgressors of this common law. Law, judge, punishment, are three things which reason and nature have joined together in indissoluble bands. A law is no law if it does not suppose a judgment, and a judgment is no judgment if it does not suppose punishment; but, if these three things be inseparable from each other, they also imply a fourth, viz., the power which renders man capable of good or evil, in opposition to brute beasts. Now from all this it appears how pernicious wilful blindness is, which makes the wicked deny the pains of hell; for thereby they turn themselves into brute beasts, and, openly professing to deny their own reason, they degrade themselves below that admirable dignity of their nature which places them above all other animal creatures.

2.) We can establish this proposition, not only by reason, but also by the *common consent of all mankind*. For, in the thickest darkness of paganism, when, as the scripture says, "God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," even then it was acknowledged that, as there was a reward proposed to the just and virtuous, so there were also punishments determined on for the unjust and impious. I own, when the pagans philosophized on these punishments, they almost all said chimerical and unreasonable things; yet, allowing this, they were not far from this general idea—there must necessarily be a punishment annexed to vice.

3.) This may be further proved by the *principles of all religions*. There never was, nor can there ever be, any which is not founded upon this principle—that God is our Sovereign Judge, who holds in his hands our life and death. This made a profane writer say, "Fear made gods."

4.) We prove the point from *revelation*, which has placed this truth in the clearest light. Refer to Isa. xxx. 33; Ps. ix. 17; Matt. xxv. 46; Luke xvi. 23; 2 Pet. ii. 4.

2. Having sufficiently proved the *certainty* of future punishment, it will be necessary for us to state those circumstances of it which require material consideration.

1.) The punishment must not be in this life only, but after death. The reason is plain—it is a punishment that must follow the judgment; for the judgment cannot be till life is ended, as the course of life we pursue must be finished before the decree can be pronounced to acquit or condemn us. It must not be imagined, therefore, that the punishment of which we speak consists in the afflictions of this life only.

2.) It must be a punishment that involves both soul and body; for, as both have joined in the practice of vice, both must also partake of the punishment; whence it follows that the punishment can neither be temporal death, which does not affect the soul, nor merely the inquietudes and agitations of conscience, which do not affect the body.

3.) It must be a real punishment, that is, something which really has the essence of pain, and actually relates to the justice of God, whence it follows that it cannot consist (as some pretend) in the annihilation of body and soul; for the divine justice demands an eternal pain, which glorifies it, and consequently which does not destroy its subject, but continues it in being for a perpetual monument of God's hatred of sin.

4.) It must be a punishment proportionable in greatness as well as in duration to the greatness of the Judge who ordains it, the tribunal which decrees it, and the Almighty hand which executes it. To give a scriptural idea of this infliction, it is called

vengeance—fire—eternal fire—the worm that dieth not—burning coals of fire—the bottomless pit, &c.

How vain, then, are all the subterfuges which sinners use on this subject! It is a distressing subject, therefore they do not like to think about it. Observe the folly of this conduct, for their condemnation is not the less certain for their forgetting it; they resemble prisoners, already in irons and doomed to punishment, who stifle the sense of their misery by plunging into debauchery. They resemble the old world, who were "eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage," as the scripture says, "and suddenly (when they least thought of it) the flood came and took them all away." But in vain will sinners comfort themselves with a notion that this day of reckoning is very far off, for "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

II. That a life formed by the Spirit of holiness cannot fail of issuing in eternal happiness.* Nothing can be more easy than to show the truth of this proposition. The scripture decides the point: Titus ii. 11—13, and iii. 8; Phil. iii. 18—20; Rom. vi. 23; Gal. v. 13, and v. 16, 17, to the end. See also Matt. v. 16, "Let your light," &c.

1. This was the principal end of Christ's coming, 1 John iii. 8, "That he might destroy the works of the devil," which are principally sin and punishment. Let it not be imagined that Jesus Christ came to take away the punishment of sin, and yet leave sin triumphant. The absurdity of the supposition refutes itself. Is it likely that Christ should have quitted the mansions of glory to obtain impunity for criminals, leaving them immersed in sensuality and sin? Is it likely that he will hold communion with sinners in rebellion and profaneness? Is it possible for the holy Jesus to join his spirit to our flesh, his purity to our profaneness, his holiness to our iniquity? This would be saying that he came to unite two things which cannot unite, which are naturally and necessarily incompatible, 2 Cor. vi. 14. An enemy once said that "Jesus Christ came into the world to make the most horrible and dreadful societies; for," says he, "he calls sinners, and not the righteous; so that the body he came to assemble is a body of profligates separated from good people, among whom they were before mixed." He has rejected all the good, and collected all the bad." False and cruel accuser! Origen, in the name of the whole church, refuted him. "True," says he, "our Jesus came to call sinners, but it was to repentance; he assembles the wicked, but it is to convert them into new men, or rather to change them into angels. We come to him covetous, he makes us liberal; unjust, he makes us equitable; lascivious, he makes us chaste; violent, he makes us meek; impious, he makes us religious." This is the true effect of communion with Jesus Christ: it transforms us into his image; and, if this does not appear, we are obliged to deny the reality of such a communion.

2. If this is true in reference to Christ Jesus the Son, so it is also in reference to the Father, to whom communion with Jesus Christ leads us. As Christ came into the world in the quality of a Mediator, he called men to himself only to unite them to God; hence what he says in John xiv. 6; xvii. 20, 21; Ps. v. 4. It is evident then that the religion of Jesus Christ, which brings us into communion with God, brings us also at the same time into true holiness, without which communion with God is impossible.

3. How, while immersed in sin, can we be temples of the Holy Ghost? Can the Holy Ghost dwell in a man without producing the effects of his power and grace? Can he dwell idly in a man? Can he possess his heart and affections, and yet leave his heart enslaved to sin? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So Paul also declares: "They that are after the flesh," &c., Rom. viii. 5. "If, therefore, any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" for, wherever this Spirit is sent, suitable effects follow.

4. If holiness be a necessary consequence of the gospel, it is no less true that the gospel is an inexhaustible source of motives to holiness. I pass over its precepts and rules of conduct, which give us an idea of holiness so lively, so beautiful, and so full of charms, that it alone is a most powerful motive to obedience. Nor will I stop to observe that the nature of vice is represented in the gospel so fully, and the horrors of it are so well described, that we must needs hold it in abhorrence. It shall be sufficient now to remark to you—if I may venture to say so, to make you feel by your own experience that nothing can be conceived more powerful than the reasons by which the Christian

* The original proposition of Claude stands thus:—"That a good and holy life is both a principal end of the gospel and an inseparable character of Christianity." The alteration appeared calculated to preserve the contrast of the text more perfectly and equally adapted to his design.

religion enforces the necessary practice of good works. All its mysteries point out this; all the most grand and most marvellous things it teaches regard this; all its doctrines are so many bonds to bind our hearts to the obedience of faith. The gospel consecrates to holy uses even what the light of nature teaches; as, that God is our creator, that he is our preserver, that he governs the universe, and particularly watches over us. What can more forcibly incline us to practice holy obedience than these important truths, if well considered? What obligations have we to God! Since he is our Creator, who gave us life and being, ought not we to devote all to him? and if we owe him all, should not we be monsters rather than men to dishonour his creation, to insult his bounty, to rebel against his laws, and not to have his glory always before our eyes? But all these motives, however great and powerful, are nothing in comparison with those which the gospel does not borrow from the light of reason, but takes from its own source—viz., such as the Holy Ghost teaches. These motives are almost all comprehended in Jesus Christ, and in the mysteries of his redemption, and they are such as must affect every soul which is not, I do not say hard and insensible, but entirely dead in sin, or possessed by the devil; for, in one word, that God, after all our rebellions and all our crimes, should yet be reconciled to us—that he should give us his Son—that he should give him to us in our own nature, to be our head, our brother, our example—that he should give him to die for us, to die the most bloody, the most ignominious, and the most cruel death that could be conceived, is not this love and mercy worthy of eternal praise? And what horrible ingratitude in us, if, after all, we should be yet capable of wilfully sinning against a God so great, and of counting the blood of such a covenant an unholy thing!*

Having already extended this Lecture beyond my original purpose, I shall only add an outline from Flavel, which is given both in the expository and propositional form. It is on Luke xxiii. 43: "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Division of the *text* in the expository form:—

- I. The matter of the promise: "Be with me in paradise."
- II. The person to whom made.
- III. The time of the performance: "To day."
- IV. The confirmation: "Verily I say unto thee."

Division of the *subject* contained in the text, termed by our old divines the doctrine drawn from the text:—

- I. There is a future eternal state into which souls pass at death.
- II. All believers at their death are immediately received into a state of glory and eternal happiness.
- III. God may, though he seldom does, prepare men for this glory immediately before their dissolution by death.

The practice of occasionally writing out a propositional thesis at full length will be found of great advantage: and in whatever method your propositions and arguments may be arranged, it may be advisable to keep before you as a general plan the method of a celebrated speaker, who—1. States, explains, and amplifies his subject. 2. Comments upon it at length, showing that it is true or false, proper or improper, &c. 3. Makes a powerful appeal to the passions.

Or in the middle part you might bring in something more exclusively argumentative, reserving comment for the concluding part. Your plan would then be,—1. State clearly. 2. Prove powerfully. 3. Persuade impressively. In the second part let the argument be exhibited in as many different views as possible: turn it, as we say, on every side, till you force conviction upon the mind.†

* A fine specimen of extended argument by Mr. Hall—viz., his sermon Against Infidelity—may here be recommended.

† Hall, Tillotson, and Sherlock, just quoted, refuted atheism and infidelity. Other quotations are directed to produce Christianity. A suitable addition to these might be a general defence of the Christian religion, as it will be found attached to the 19th Topic, both by itself, as well as the other works we commend of the same character.

LECTURE IX.

ON UNIFORM APPLICATION.

THE last kind of textual discourse is now before us, but though the last, it is by no means the least in importance to the honour of the ministry. Direct address will, with the divine blessing, powerfully co-operate with *comment* to secure success. I regard these two articles as my sheet-anchor and best bower; if these do not hold ground, the vessel will either get on shore or be driven out.

In uniform or continued application the whole discourse is to be of precisely the same character as the concluding part of other discourses. It is in fact a peroration, if I may so speak, extended so as to occupy the whole time of the preacher.* If judiciously introduced, it will gain and fix the hearers' attention, and if skillfully managed will retain it to the end. When the preacher attains facility in this branch of his work, he will be nearest to perfection. A mere collegian may explicate; a philosopher may make wise observations; a pleader may bring forth his strong reasons; but the man who can maintain a uniform address to the people's hearts for from forty to sixty minutes, he is the preacher! It is true, when we consider how many excellences must unite to form such a preacher, it does appear difficult. He must be touched with all Christian sympathies; but, if he be indeed renewed after the divine image, sympathies suitable are already in the heart. He must be oratorical in his address; but grace gives eloquence. His zeal must be ardent; but the object is sufficient to inspire it. His fidelity must be exemplary, and his love to souls unquenchable; but will not the "love of Christ constrain?" If the preacher possess these qualities, and be himself under the influence of correct feelings, he will, no doubt, succeed in producing corresponding sentiments in the breasts of his hearers.

"*Pietas est quod disertum facit et vis mentis.*"

The love of Christ in the heart, united to energy of mind, will make a man truly eloquent. Possessing these, the preacher has only to *believe* himself capable, and he *is* capable: Mark ix. 23. Thus even the "feeble shall be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord" (Zech. xii. 8), who went before the young champion when Goliath was about to meet him in the hostile field.

Rules for the judicious management of this kind of discourse, unhappily, have been but sparingly given us. Claude says next to nothing; perhaps he expected the student to form rules from his examples. The following may, however, be of use:—

1. This kind of preaching admits aid from every variety of discussion: explanation, observation, and even trains of reasoning, are admissible where they can properly be made to appear, not as the principal points, but as a foundation for direct address.

2. As this is the most popular kind of preaching, no particular doctrines must be introduced, except those which bear directly on the fall and recovery of mankind, and these rather incidentally than in a formal statement; and for this reason, that here you have more to do with the heart than the understanding.

3. The subject must be select. The text must be adapted to it. The topics must be undeniably true, and well chosen. The select parts of such topics, such as are most impressive and awakening, must be insisted on.

* It is a speech or oration, rather than a sermon.

There must be a selection of characters to be addressed, and the language must be adapted to such characters. The time and the occasion must be considered, as prudence directs. There must be a real occasion for such address in the state of the people, or at least of part of them. The state of the preacher's own mind should be considered : he is not always in a suitable frame for such an exercise.

4. Particularly the passions of the audience must be powerfully appealed to.

5. Though the preacher's feelings should be powerfully excited, yet they must be under due government. No extravagant transports must be indulged, or it will be said, "He is mad ; why hear ye him ?"

6. The preacher will easily perceive whether his hearers think his discourse wearisome, and at that point he must desist from enlarging on the topic in hand.

7. Endeavour to keep something particularly striking for the last.

Having laid these rules before you, I shall at once proceed to offer some appropriate examples.

Claude on Phil. ii. 12 : "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The exordium turns on the comparative inefficiency of the gospel, and the small number of the saved, which are pathetically described. The general division embraces, I. Some considerations respecting our own salvation. II. The acts by which it is worked out. III. The fear and trembling with which these acts are performed. This is formed on the expository plan, but the discourse is nevertheless a good specimen of uniform application, and it will be necessary to present it at some length. See a critique on this passage in List of Scriptures.

I. Some considerations respecting our own salvation.

1. God has had so much compassion on us as to prepare for us a salvation. We were his enemies, and he has mercifully provided reconciliation. We were dead, and he has proposed a resurrection for us. We were plunged into an abyss of misery, and he has kindly stretched out his hand from on high to help us.

2. Salvation consists in benefits inexpressible, of immense value, which we cannot sufficiently esteem ; for they must be proportioned to the worth of the blood of Christ which merited them. This blood, which has acquired salvation for us, is of all things the most sacred and valuable, and yet the most mournful and affecting. Enter, then, I entreat you, with me into this meditation. Whence is it we take so little pains about that which is so very important to us ? Salvation presents itself every day to us—a rich treasure, coming from the bosom of eternal mercy, as the divine and incomparable production of the Son of God. It is a vessel which presents itself to us in this sad shipwreck which we have made, yet we do not think about it ; and when we reflect on the little attention that we have hitherto paid to the voice of God, who hath so often spoken to us, we are astonished to find ourselves under such extreme stupidity.

3. Take some distinct views of facts. Turn your eyes to the miserable state of those who neglect it during the whole course of their lives, and at length go out of the world without having at all employed themselves about it. Behold, I beseech you, what a great number of unbelieving and profane sinners there are in the world ! Would you choose to be of their number ? One is a giddy young creature, whose head is full of vanity. Another is an old miser, who has filled his house with extortions and iniquities. A third is a proud and cruel wretch, who delights and glories in violence and blood, like a wild beast. A fourth is a sly hypocrite, who never appears in the world unmasked, who never goes out but to set snares, nor ever stirs but to deceive the simple—a notorious impostor, who thinks only how he may impose on the world. Another is a filthy epicure, always drowned in wine, or immersed in sensual pleasures—a swine, whose soul is buried in flesh, and who thinks of nothing but how to invent new pleasures or improve old ones.

How many abysses has vice opened to engulf mankind ! Into how many shapes does it transform itself to surprise and destroy them ! Sometimes it appears under the beautiful veil of riches and grandeur, sometimes under the agreeable charms of sensual pleasures, sometimes under the pretence of supporting our own interests and satiating

a just revenge, sometimes under the reasons we have to envy another's prosperity, sometimes under the idea of the joy of succeeding in a lawful enterprise. In short, sin is a Proteus, changing itself into a thousand shapes, or a serpent, twisting itself a thousand ways, to slide into men's hearts, in order to prevent their thinking about their own salvation.

Cast your eyes on this part of the world in particular, which appears the most civilized and refined; you will see people so immersed in an almost infinite number of occupations that there does not remain a moment to think on serious things. Some are wrapt up in the study of human sciences, and others in commerce; each gives himself up entirely, and none remembers the one thing needful. Religion does not hinder lawful employments, but it restrains them within proper bounds, that itself may not be hindered by them.

Nay, even good people are too much attached to this world, forgetful of the caution of Christ Jesus, Luke xxi. 34. Many are the bad consequences that result from these overchargings of worldly care.

4. Particularly view this salvation as a protecting blessing. We must die—we must come to judgment.

We must die. All that we can say of life is that it is very short. Soon the summons may come, and suddenly break off all our earthly schemes; nay, even the best of plans must be interrupted, however little progress we have made in them. At this moment man feels the mighty hand of Omnipotence drawing him to himself. Then is he seized, and forced, in spite of himself, before the throne of the sovereign Judge of the whole earth. In these last moments, as the eyes of the body are darkened, those of the mind are enlightened, and, penetrating into the secrets of the world to come, discover the good or evil consequences which we must expect. What dreadful blindness is it, then, that with so much certainty, so many marks, so many outward and inward testimonies of this divine judgment, we should yet neglect to prepare for it, and leave an article so capital—on which eternity depends—to hazard!

One of the most useful and admirable powers which nature has bestowed upon man, which follows reason, and distinguishes man from other animals, is *prudence*, a sagacity respecting future things. Beasts, which have not received this advantage from the hand of nature, only act and display their feeble senses about present things; they walk the way that offers to their eyes; they eat the herb which they see; and only move as they are enticed by objects at which they look: but, as they have no knowledge of futurity, they are at perfect rest. It is quite otherwise with man: his reason anticipates years and ages; he sees things long before they arrive; he knows them by a concatenation of causes and effects; and at the same time provides to forward or frustrate them. By this prudential foresight kingdoms and empires support themselves; by this cities and families are preserved; and by this all men endeavour, as far as possible, to provide for contingencies. How then comes it to pass that, while we employ our prudence so well about temporal things, we are all of a sudden deprived of it when we should be concerned about the most important of all things—salvation or damnation? I cannot help noticing two illusions to which the greatest portion of mankind are subject.

1.) We almost always imagine our salvation a very easy thing. One moment, say we, is sufficient for our conversion; and a true conversion, though wrought in a moment, is sufficient to save us: besides, the time of calling is long—it continues till death. This is as much as to say that, when we have employed the best part of our days in our pleasures and sinful interests, we shall have time enough to repent and be saved. Never was anything more false and deceitful than this idea of salvation. I grant there needs only a good and sincere conviction in order to salvation. I own, further, that this is not unexampled. God does sometimes, though seldom, grant such late repentance; one instance is on record—the thief upon the cross. This instance occurred in that action in which our Redeemer offered his eternal sacrifice for the whole world; in that action in which he caused the smoke of his oblation to ascend, as it were, from earth to heaven, in a sweet-smelling savour to God the Father; in that action in which the sun was eclipsed, the earth trembled, the graves opened, the veil of the temple was rent in twain: it was, I say, very just that the Saviour's blood should work a miracle, and that the Spirit of grace, to honour the death of the eternal Son of God, should display his power in an extraordinary manner. But let no one imagine from this example that it shall be so with him. Jesus Christ dies not every day; his blood was shed but once; and who told you that what he did in the act of his sacrifice he will repeat again every day?

Consider, again, that conversion in the last hour is the most difficult thing in the

world. The soul is, as it were, exhausted—without power, without light. The heart is bound by a thousand old habits, which, like so many chains, prevent a freedom of action. The conscience has been long in a profound lethargy. All the doors of the soul are shut against the best feelings. In short, the whole man is sunk in stupidity, and so incorporated with the world (if I may venture to say so) that the world is, as it were, incorporated into his own substance, and become essential to him. By what means, then, shall man be brought out of such a miserable state? By what means shall he be detached from all the relations and connexions which he has formed with the world and its vanities? I know God can do it, for nothing is impossible with him; but for this purpose there must be an extraordinary effort of grace, a singular effect of the Omnipotence of God. If the Lord said, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," how much more may we say this of an *old* rich man, of an old sinner who has added to the obstacle of riches thousands of vices and crimes?

I am not afraid to say that the sin of those who defer their repentance is of so *aggravated* a nature that it renders them altogether unworthy* of God's extraordinary aid to convert them. Such people are crafty deceivers, who act fraudulently with God, and pretend to dupe him with their artifices; for they do as much as say, God calls us, and we acknowledge repentance is just and necessary if we mean to be saved; but in order to this we must quit our pleasures. What then must we do to enjoy our delightful sins, and yet avoid damnation? This is the way: we will be wiser than God; we will employ all our best days in debaucheries and sins, and so content ourselves with them, and when we are no longer good for anything, we will be converted, and so prevent our damnation. Do you think a reasoning so horrible, a procedure so detestable, can be agreeable to God? Do you think it will invite him to bestow extraordinary converting grace on such affronting wretches? No, surely! What! because God is free in the dispensations of his grace, is there any likelihood that he will bestow it under such circumstances?

Consider, I entreat you, there cannot be a more foolish and rash design than that of putting off repentance to an old age, since it takes for granted the most doubtful and uncertain thing in the world, which is, that we shall live to *hoary old age*. Is not this the grossest of all illusions? I am not urging what every one knows, that no one can assure himself of to-morrow. I say to you something more striking. Make the different orders of man pass before your eyes; count them one by one; and it is certain the number of those who die before they are thirty years of age is incomparably greater than of those who come to that age. How many die between thirty and forty! How few arrive at fifty! Fewer still at sixty! And how very small in all ages and countries is the number of old men! In a city which contains a million of souls you will find two or three thousand old people; that is, in the proportion of two or three hundred to every hundred thousand souls. Now, allowing this, what foolish security is it to imagine you shall be of the happy number of these two or three hundred in a multitude of a hundred thousand! Were a man to hazard his fortune for such an uncertainty, he would pass in the world for a madman, and all his relations and friends, his wife and children would pity and confine him. But thou, miserable wretch! dost thou hazard thy salvation, thy soul, the friendship of thy God, thy eternal happiness, on this frivolous hope? and, to complete thy misery, do thy wife, thy children, thy friends and relatives, do all the world, let thee go on so; or, if they advise thee, dost thou pay no regard to their advice?

2.) The second illusion, which beguiles multitudes, is an imagination that they discharge their duty when, without concerning themselves about their own salvation, as the apostle commands, they employ themselves about that of *other people*. There are, in general, two ways of doing this:—First, by *saying* the finest things in the world about religion. Observe what passes in the world, you will hardly find one, among many, employed about their own salvation; yet every body tells you we ought to be good people—the corruption of the age we live in is prodigious—there is hardly any virtue or good faith—there is very little profession of practical religion, and almost no real godliness. These common-place sayings are in the mouths of all; but with all their fine speeches, you will rarely find one retiring from general view, seriously reflecting on himself, and saying, What am I? Am I like others? Some, I allow, yea, every one, ought to correct himself. Is it not just that I should begin with myself, put the first hand to the work, and set an example to my brethren? The second way of pretending concern about the salvation of others, without attending to

* The term *unworthy* is evidently too weak to express the idea intended by our author, and it is an unhappy one, as it by consequence seems to allow of worthiness in us of converting grace.

their own, is still more scandalous than the first. It consists in being always on the watch to *censure* and slander the actions of others. If they be really blameworthy, you will hear them exclaim against their crimes; they will appear to be extremely offended; they will set them off with the blackest circumstances, and exaggerate them in every degree. But, if the actions of others be apparently good and virtuous, not being able to condemn them in themselves they will condemn them in their principles: "It is only," say they, "the effect of ambition or hypocrisy; they only want to make a parade, to be talked of, and raise their credit and reputation with good men." Certainly all these are very distant from Paul's meaning when he says, "Work out your own salvation." I will not say we are entirely to neglect the salvation of our neighbours. God commands, and charity demands, that we should not, and it would be a very unworthy and wicked saying, should any, like Cain, cry out, "Am I my brother's keeper?" However, I do affirm, it is not this only which ought to employ us; this is not our first and principal occupation. We must *begin* by working out our own salvation; to this we must particularly apply ourselves, lest, while we correct others, we become incorrigible ourselves. "I keep under my body," says Paul, "and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

II. The acts by which this salvation is to be wrought out. And, as the thing itself is important, so are its acts, and require your present and immediate attention.

1. Complete reconciliation with God. For this purpose, cast your eyes on the greatness of your sins, which are continually committed against him; and having considered what favours you have received and how shamefully you have abused them—having conceived a just grief for such unnumbered transgressions—humbly have recourse to the divine mercy. Let each of you in particular recal his wanderings from God. Let the passionate remember the injustice of their angry transports. Let the covetous remember the many oblique ways they have taken to amass riches. Let the implacable, the proud, the slanderous, the revengeful, remember the injuries they have done to their neighbours. Let the vain and the voluptuous think of the many vain and rash desires they have had for earthly things. This is the act of repentance so pathetically expressed by the penitent David in the fifty-first Psalm. This is the repentance which the Psalmist, afraid of the anger of God, expresses, Ps. cxix. 120. This is the repentance which Jesus Christ proposes to us in the example of the Prodigal Son, Luke xv. : "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight," &c. As our repentance, however sincere, avails nothing without a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, let us add a holy and fervent recourse to the blood of Christ, and to the satisfaction which he presented to God the Father on the cross. This is the faith so often pointed out to us in scripture, and to which the gospel is not afraid of joining the promise of eternal life, 1 John ii. 1, 2: "If any man sin, we have an advocate," &c. "We are justified freely by his grace," says Paul, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Through this Redeemer God will be reconciled to us; and we shall find grace in his sight, when we present ourselves before him in communion with this Saviour; for "there is no other name," Acts iv. 12; "His blood alone cleanseth," &c., 1 John i. 7. What joy, my brethren, to wash in this mystical Jordan! How happy shall we be if we can lay our hands on the head of this holy victim, that in charging him we may be discharged from all our crimes! "Come unto me," says Jesus, "all ye who are heavy laden," &c.

As this peace with God is not made in a moment, there must be great efforts made to bring our hearts into a state proper for such a reconciliation. Having therefore collected your sins before your eyes, make some reflections on the horrors of them.

1.) Let us examine what we are in comparison with God, the great God! A little handful of dust and ashes, a little earth kneaded together with a little blood, miserable worms, a leaf carried away with the wind, a vapour which the sun exhales and dissipates. Are we not, in comparison with God, "less than nothing, and vanity," the creatures of a day? And yet, altogether miserable as we are, we dare to insult the Majesty of heaven. This vain shadow vaunts itself against the sun; this drop of water contends with the ocean. Tell me, is there the least spark of reason in all this? Can any blindness equal ours, under such a state of things?

2.) Does not our blindness appear still more strange if to this we add the power of God, whom we have offended? He plants, and he plucks up; he builds, and he destroys; he kills, and he makes alive; he raises, and he abases; he comforts, and he afflicts; yea, all destinies are in his hands, and depend on his sovereign will. What wildness, then, so frequently to offend an Almighty God, who will not justify the

wicked, who will not hold the sinner guiltless, and who declares that the wicked shall not stand in judgment!

3.) Consider how much we are indebted to God, not only for his patience hitherto, but that almost infinite number of *mercies* which he has afforded us. What has prevented the Lord executing his great vengeance on us? Why were we not destroyed the first moment we offended him? What, then, shall we say when this patience shall reckon the days, the months, and years, of its exercise towards us? What shall we have to answer when it shall accuse us of employing this long period only to increase the number of our sins? But what will become of us if, in addition to the voice of the law and the complaints of patience, we find the favours and mercies of God rise up against us to reproach us for our ingratitude? Were he not the God of our mercies, our obligations would remain; but when we consider the whole account of mercies received, if we still remain obdurate, what can save us? God's goodness is particularly calculated to bring us to repentance. If there be a spark of ingenuousness in our nature, it must be moved, touched by kindness, mercy such as we have received; but if these mercies do not soften our hearts, they will another day witness against us.

4.) This submission by repentance is absolutely indispensable. "Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed." God changeth not; therefore we must, or happiness with him in another world cannot be expected. Nor may this repentance be slight or superficial; it must go to the bottom of our disease and misery. We must tell you the truth in this matter, or be partners in your guilt. To incline you more effectually to this repentance, let us, I beseech you, lift up our eyes to the mercy-seat of God, and to the blood of the covenant which Jesus Christ has shed for us. Let us not imagine, while we feel remorse for sin, that there is "no balm in Gilead," no consolation in God. Doubtless there is; and, were we such as we ought, we might come with boldness to the throne of grace, and be assured of obtaining mercy, Heb. iv. 16, 17. "Come now," says God by the prophet, "let us reason together," &c., Isa. i. 18. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die," saith the Lord God, "and not that he return from his evil ways, and live?" Let us, therefore, while he is saying, "Seek ye my face," say, "Thy face, O Lord, we will seek."

2. Diligence in the use of those means by which peace is preserved. In order to work out our salvation, we must not only be reconciled to God, but,

1.) Our faith must be kept and increased; and as both the increase and preservation of our faith will be promoted by a frequent perusal of the holy scriptures, assiduity in religious exercises, attachment to prayer, O let us form now the design of diligently applying our hearts to these, and shaking off as much as possible the thoughts and business of this present life. How can we employ ourselves better than in conversing with the doctrines and precepts of religion?

2.) Our life must manifest our concern for holiness. Let us, my brethren, resolve to acquit ourselves well in the duties which we owe to God and our neighbour, preserving a conscience void of offence. He that repenteth and *forsaketh* sin shall find mercy; repenting and sinning again will infallibly harden the heart still more. This course is dreadful beyond compare; by trifling with God we are acting the part of hypocrites, and thereby bringing a new species of guilt on our souls.

III. Notice the fear and trembling which are to accompany these acts. As this peace which repentance works in us is not a carnal security, a sinful lethargy, it is not contrary to every kind of fear; or, more properly, it is not only compatible with fear, but it is preserved only by means of fear. St. Paul, therefore, was not content with commanding us to work out our own salvation, but he adds, "with fear and trembling," prescribing in these words the manner of our conducting ourselves in the work of our salvation. On this we have a few reflections to make.

1. By the words "fear and trembling" he means a very different thing from *slavish* fear, which would make us regard God as a judge, always severe and always angry; or as a hard master, who, let us do what we would, would always be dissatisfied with our services, who would only meditate evil, and seek every occasion of avenging himself on us, and who even sets snares to entangle us into perdition. On the contrary, nothing can be more hurtful to the creature, nothing more injurious to God, nothing more injurious to true piety. This fear, which is only proper to devils and damned spirits, is a perpetual source of disquietudes and agitations, and it can only in the end drive to madness and despair. What possibility is there of saving ourselves from the hands of the devil if God is resolved on our destruction? or what hope can we have of escaping punishment, if his natural properties incline him to hate and destroy us? What can be more injurious to God than such a thought? "As I live," says Jehovah, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather

that he turn from his evil way, and live." No, my brethren, God is not naturally an enemy to his own work. I grant, he is just; and, because he is just, he will not always chastise us for our sins. Moreover, he has so much goodness and tenderness for us that he freely opens a way to return to his favour by means of a Mediator, and is now calling us to repentance. Besides all this, he has promised to treat us with the kindness and tenderness of a father; and as such, to bear with our infirmities. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," Ps. ciii. 13. Far then from us be this slavish fear. Piety is nothing but a profound esteem, a supreme love of God; but can this exist where such fear remains? "Perfect love casteth out fear."

2. This fear is *filial*, which not only agrees with confidence and love, but is their perpetual associate.

1.) This fear impresses us with profound veneration when we appear before him, considering his infinite majesty, the ineffable wisdom and glorious power which shine in all his works; his justice and holiness; in a word, all his perfections; so that we cannot consider them without diminishing in his presence.

2.) When we reflect on the great privilege which God has granted us, by declaring himself our Father in Jesus Christ, it is not possible for us not to be under perpetual apprehensions of offending him.

3.) When we reflect on ourselves—how naturally we are prone to evil—this must fill us with apprehensions; and we see how properly we should not be high-minded, but fear; that we should serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

4.) When we consider, further, our very infirmities and weaknesses, which even in a renewed state cleave to us, and when we compare these with the various temptations to which we are subject, we must fear.

5.) Though the grace of God, which supports us in temptations, be capable of preserving us, yet, should God suspend the influences of grace, what advantages would not the flesh obtain over the spirit, as the falls of David and Peter demonstrate to us! Need, indeed, we have to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." In a word, there are five kinds of fear; a fear of respect, considering the majesty of God; a fear of sorrow, in regard to sin; a fear of humility, remembering that all we are is of pure grace; a fear of precaution, remembering our frailty; and a fear of attachment to God, saying, "Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me."

In this manner let us "work out our own salvation;" and God, beholding his talents multiply in our hands, will increase their number by adding blessing upon blessing, till at length he will change grace into glory, and give us the entire and perfect enjoyment of his everlasting inheritance.

The above is the original pattern given by Claude of this kind of discourse. Both Mr. Robinson and Mr. Simeon think very highly of it as a composition. I cannot but think it would be more effective if the pronouns in many passages were put in the second person, instead of *we, we*, in so many sentences. "Thou art the man," was Nathan's address. Preachers cannot be too direct; they should speak, as the Hebrew phrase is, *על לב* *al labe*, to the heart and conscience. Thus Moses addressed a long discourse to the Israelites, in the book of Deuteronomy, wherein we shall find every thing necessary to a discourse on the principle of continued application. I think a student would spend a few days well in studying the temper and spirit in which Moses wrote it, the topics he introduces, the passions he seeks to move, the insinuating style he employs, and the energy he discovers. I should conceive that no oration of Demosthenes is at all to be compared with Moses' sermon. As to the foregoing example from Claude, it must be owned that many of his topics are excellent, his manner is insinuating, and his similes are good. Nevertheless, I prefer Mr. Walker of Edinburgh to any French patterns. English people understand and feel English eloquence best. So one of our English poets compares the two kinds together, and says,—

"The weighty bullion of one sterling line,
Drawn in French wire, would through whole pages shine."—WALLER.

My next example is from Walker on 2 Cor. vi. 1: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

The first question that will always occur to an awakened sinner has been expressed by the prophet Micah in these words: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God?" and the only answer to this question which an unenlightened mind can suggest hath also been expressed by the same prophet: "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?" &c. A conscience alarmed with a sense of guilt naturally represents the Most High as clothed with terrible majesty, as a God of vengeance, a stern, unrelenting creditor, demanding payment even to the uttermost farthing. And however the advocates for the light of nature may boast of their discoveries, it may be pronounced impossible for unassisted reason, proceeding on sound principles, to discover any means whereby guilty creatures can hope to satisfy the justice, or regain the friendship, of their Maker. All our knowledge with regard to this subject must flow from revelation alone. The sanctions of justice may, indeed, be comprehended by human reason; but justice demands inexorably the punishment of transgressors. Justice admits no claim for the exercise of mercy. Nay more, mercy does not even come within the strict conception of legal administration, but is an act of pure prerogative, having no other measure than the will of the sovereign.

Why did God create a world? No answer can be given to this question, but that it was his sovereign pleasure so to do. No other reason but the same sovereign pleasure can be assigned for man's existence on earth, with all the honours conferred upon him at his first creation. And now that man has forfeited these honours, and incurred the penalty annexed to his disobedience, whither shall we resort to find an inducement for his Creator to show him mercy? Can rebellion, outrageous, unprovoked rebellion, furnish a motive to pity? Can deformity and pollution present any attractions of love? No: it is manifest that, after all our researches, we must finally have recourse to what God himself said to Moses of old: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Upon this principle the apostle proceeds in the passage I have quoted: "All things are of God," saith he, "who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," &c. Having by his infinite wisdom and self-moving goodness opened a way for extending mercy to offenders, consistent with the honour of his perfections, he proceeds to complete the gracious plan by sending forth some of the apostate race as ambassadors for Christ, to beseech sinners in his own name, and in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. In this character Paul beseeches the Corinthians, in the most earnest manner, "not to receive the grace of God in vain." The same exhortation I now address to you, deeming it peculiarly seasonable in the near view we have of celebrating that solemn ordinance of our religion, in which the grace of God appears in all its lustre and glory.

It seems unnecessary to employ many words in explaining the exhortation, its meaning being so clearly ascertained by the connection in which it stands as to be obvious to every intelligent reader. All that is necessary to be observed is, that we are to look for the true import of the grace of God, which the apostle beseeches the Corinthians not to receive in vain, in that ministry or word of reconciliation which he had already said was committed to himself and to his brethren in the apostleship. This appears to consist of two parts:

I. The declaration of an important fact: God was in Christ, reconciling, &c., and

II. An exhortation founded on this fact: We pray you, &c. Hence it is evident that receiving this grace of God imports neither more nor less than believing the fact, and complying with the exhortation; and consequently everything short of this is receiving the grace of God in vain. Without any further explanation, therefore, I shall now proceed to press the exhortation by the most powerful arguments which I am able to present to your minds.

1. Let me, then, beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain, by the consideration of the misery and abject bondage of your condition while you continue thus perverse and ungrateful. I will not enter into any speculative disquisitions with regard to pretensions of natural religion. Whether those who never heard of the grace of God revealed in the gospel may yet be saved by the efficacy of an unknown atonement is a question with which we have very little concern. I speak at present to those whose fate has nothing to do with the determination of that question. What say the scriptures of truth with respect to them? "He that believeth on the Son hath life." Ponder what follows: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." How awful are these words: "God is angry with the wicked every day; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he has also prepared for him the instruments of death." And oh, how hopeless a warfare is that you have undertaken! Is there any that ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Is there any stronghold or lurking place where the enemies of his government

may be safe? Go, try the whole creation round. Ascend to heaven; and he is there in the brightness of his majesty. Go down to the regions of darkness; and he is there in the severity of his justice. Take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; even there his boundless dominion extends; even there his right hand shall hold thee a prisoner to his vengeance. Go, ask protection of the highest angel; and he will tell you that one sin ruined myriads of his companions, and how should he protect you from the penalty of multiplied transgressions? And if so exalted a being cannot save you, what can you hope from any other part of the creation? "Surely in vain is salvation looked for from the hills and the mountains." There is no other deliverer than this Jesus whom we preach. He is the only surety that can pay all our debts, and even he can profit us nothing till we receive him into our hearts by faith; till that happy moment the weight of all our sins lie upon us, and nothing but the brittle thread of life suspends us from sinking for ever into the pit where there is no hope.

But the prospect of impending misery is not the only circumstance that characterizes your unhappy condition. Present bondage, distressing and disgraceful bondage, is no less a just description of your state. The enemy of God and man rules in your hearts, and by his imperious commands all your inclinations and actions are swayed. It is possible, indeed, that this shameful slavery may be unknown to yourselves. You may flatter yourselves with a supposed liberty, and even boast of your freedom from those restraints to which the religious part of mankind are subject. But be assured this is no proof that your shackles are not real and binding. The tyrant to whom you are subject rules by deceit still more than by force, and all his artifices are used to blind the eyes of his prisoners. Nay, it may be asserted with confidence that if you have not felt your chains, if you have not been conscious of a struggle to get free from them, your redemption is not yet begun; for violence there must be, and violence that cannot but be felt, before the usurper of your liberty be dethroned. Such, then, is your unhappy and disgraceful condition while you receive the grace of God in vain: and let me remind you that this is no painting of mine; I have only declared the oracles of truth, to which you must submit.

II. Let me beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain, by the consideration of the happiness of those who give it a full and cordial reception. Every one of this happy number is justified from the guilt of all his iniquities; and say whether you have well weighed the value of even this lowest privilege of a believer? I am aware that thoughtless transgressors can have no conception of its importance; in their mad and desperate folly they even make a mock at sin, and deride the fears of the contrite and penitent. But go, ask the pardoned sinner what he thinks of the benefits of forgiveness. Hear the grateful accents of one who spoke from deep and thorough experience: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, so that my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness: therefore shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found, and I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord my God, for ever and ever." But this forgiveness, precious and valuable as it is, is only the introductory blessing bestowed on those who give the grace of God a cordial reception. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and peace with their own consciences. The cause of enmity being removed, they are restored to friendship with their Maker; God is not ashamed to be called their Father, nor reluctant to bestow on them all the blessings and honours that appertain to his children. Hence the rapturous gratitude of the apostle John, too big for expression, and yet, for the very want of expression, more forcible than the most descriptive eloquence: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The meanest individual, nay, the most abandoned sinner that now hears me, may yet become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, a king and a priest unto God, and a pillar in the heavenly temple, never to be removed. Let your desires soar to the greatest height—stretch your imaginations to the utmost—yet the liberality of God will be still more unbounded. Much he has bestowed on his people, and many similitudes he has condescended to use that their slow minds might be assisted in conceiving of his bounty; but nowhere hath he said, "This is all your portion, or beyond this no more is to be expected:" no, his bounty will be an everlasting fountain, and benefits for ever shall nourish everlasting gratitude in the

bosoms of the redeemed. For "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Peruse the valedictory discourse of our Lord to his disciples, and learn from it what you may lawfully expect from a reconciled Father. All your prayers shall be heard. The Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, shall come into your hearts, and lead you into the knowledge of all truth. You shall be made fruitful in the works of righteousness. God himself shall make his abode with you. You shall be kept from the evil of the world while in it, and at last shall be where your Redeemer is, to behold his glory, and to partake of his bliss.

And shall these considerations be still insufficient to determine your choice? Oh, wonder not at the unbelieving Jews, who persecuted and slew the Lord of life. Let not your indignant sentiments rise at their injustice and cruelty. Their sin and folly was light compared with yours, who now reject his counsels and despise his grace. Their scorn was excited by his mean appearance, and they hid their faces from him because disguised in the form of a servant. But I will tell you a thing more horrible and astonishing: the Son of God, clothed in all the mild array of an exalted Saviour, and stretching forth his hands to bestow all the blessings purchased with his blood, is still despised and rejected. Thou, O impenitent sinner, thou art the man guilty of this contempt and ingratitude; yet, blessed be God, though thou mayest justly be charged with this almost incredible guilt, I am still warranted to beseech thee not to receive the grace of God in vain.

III. By the consideration of the riches of his long-suffering and forbearance. Long as his mercy has been insulted, it is still offered you. I need not appeal to particular passages of scripture to confirm this comfortable truth. It appears conspicuously through the whole tenour of revelation, every page of which contains the language of love and compassion to sinners. Review the history of Jesus, and after you have seen what he has already done for your sakes, try if you can possibly question his goodwill. Did he condescend to be clothed with our mortal flesh, and will he disdain the entertainment of an affectionate and grateful heart? Did he bleed and die on the cross for our sins, and will he fail to perfect his work in our salvation? It was a powerful argument which the apostle Paul employed on a certain occasion: "Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" So say I to you: Do you believe the history of our Saviour, as recorded by the four Evangelists? How do you read them? What was it that affected him with grief? was it not the hardness of men's hearts? What was it that drew tears from his compassionate eyes? was it not the view of Jerusalem, that impenitent city, which knew not or regarded not the day of its merciful visitation? Nay, what was the errand on which he solemnly declared himself to have come into the world? was it not "to seek and to save that which was lost?" And oh, will you counteract, by your obstinate folly, all these gracious intentions on his part? Will you persist in rejecting his grace until you have extorted vengeance and indignation from him whose grace is love? How dreadful in that case must your doom be! As you love your souls, be warned in time against this desperate, this ruinous madness. The gracious call still resounds in your ears, "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" and we, as ambassadors, are still charged "to beseech you, in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."

And now, let me ask, what impression have these plain and obvious remonstrances made on your minds? What may be their effect I cannot tell; this I know, that, if I could hope to succeed better, I would with pleasure come down and address each of you, even on my bended knees, obtesting you by every solemn, every tender argument, to flee from the wrath to come. I easily foresee the time when the remembrance of this offered grace shall fill you either with joy unutterable or with fruitless and everlasting anguish. For, whatever thoughtless sinners may imagine, no word of God shall ever return to him void, but shall accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. "We are a sweet savour to God," saith Paul, "in those that believe, and in those that perish; to the one we are a savour of life unto life, and to the other of death unto death." I am aware that pleadings of this kind are sometimes treated with ridicule, but the time is at hand when the scoffer shall be made sober; the day of death may do it,—the day of judgment certainly will.

Now then is the accepted time. Now you may obtain an interest in this Saviour; and, if you apply to him, as sure as God liveth you shall find mercy. Thus far I can go; but one step further I cannot proceed upon sure ground. I cannot promise you any future time. If you reject the counsel of God now, I cannot assure even the youngest of you another opportunity. Before to-morrow your doom may be fixed unalterably. May God enable you to profit by these instructions, and to his name be praise!

When I reflected on the matter and arrangement of this sermon, I was lost in admiration. How suited to the nature of the text—to the character of an ambassador of Jesus! In what impressive points of view does the author place the scriptures he quotes! Nay, how scriptural is every line! for, though it is not filled with the words of scripture, it would be quite easy to find scripture language for every sentiment. Though the language is supplicatory, yet it is dignified; though strong, yet not bombastic. The author's judgment is every where as striking as his affectionate manner. What admirable topics! how skilfully introduced! how well conducted! how decently dismissed, before they become wearisome! How beautiful his figures of speech, and expressed in the fewest and choicest words! Upon the whole, I scruple not to recommend Walker as a pattern of imitation to young preachers, and permit me to remind you that such solemn truths require a grave and deliberate delivery; after many of the appeals, there ought to be pauses to produce and give time for reflection.

The following is from the *Horæ Homileticæ*, on Numbers x. 29.

I. The invitation. The Journey of Israel in the wilderness was altogether typical of our journey heavenward. When, therefore, in the name of all Israel, we say to every individual amongst you, Come thou with us, we in effect say—

1. Set your faces in good earnest towards the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey—all gospel blessedness. Estimate these things properly: lose no time in preparation; engage at once in their pursuit, lest you fail of obtaining them. See Heb. iv. 1.

2. Let nothing be suffered to retard you in your progress thitherwards: Matt. x. 37—39. What considerations can outweigh the value of heaven? What should hinder, what should discourage you?

3. Proceed steadily till you are in possession of it, no tardiness or weariness, no impatience or change of purpose.

4. Object not on account of him or those whose counsel is offered you, for the prime inviter is your divine Saviour. Parties or sects are nothing; you are to be on the Lord's side. Exod. xxxii. 26.

II. The arguments by which it is enforced. If you accept the invitation, consider,

1. What benefit will accrue to yourselves. "God has spoken good concerning Israel; both in their way and in their end they shall be truly blessed."

2. What benefit you will confer upon others. "Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes." You will become a blessing by your prayers, and an example by your works of faith and labours of love.

III. Address,

1. Those who have never yet thought of the invitation given them.

2. Those who, having once accepted it, are disposed, or half inclined, to turn back.

3. Those who, having given themselves up to Christ, are cleaving to him with full purpose of heart.

Though the above is only a meagre outline, you will easily perceive that it is so constructed as to furnish admirable openings in every part for direct address.

To promote variety, which is both pleasing and edifying, I shall attempt an example which may serve to show that even doctrinal subjects are capable of being discussed on the principles of continued address. I will found this attempt on Dr. Gill's sermon on Col. i. 19: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The doctor's sermon is destitute of application, at least in my view of it: he rested every thing on statement and argument. I shall adopt from him what appears most proper for my purpose, and diminish or add as occasion requires.

This unequivocal assertion of the mediatorial fulness of Christ is, my dear brethren, of the utmost importance to your present and everlasting interests. Give me, therefore, your best attention. I will not say I have a right to demand it (though I might say so), but rather in love I entreat it; and what greater proof of my love can I give

than to introduce you to Him who is "altogether lovely," and who is able and willing to supply your every want out of his fulness? I shall set before you some particulars of this fulness:

I. To excite your adoration, look at the *personal* fulness of Jesus. This is not an affair of philosophic reasoning; as "none by searching can find out God," so none knoweth the Son but the Father. You are to receive it on the evidence of the text, and on corresponding attestations. I refer you to chapter ii. 9: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is not only like God, but he is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. There is no perfection essential to Deity but what dwells in him, nor is there any the Father has but he has it likewise. Eternity is peculiar to the Godhead; so Christ "is before all things," ver. 17. In this manner we prove by scripture that every other attribute and perfection of the divine nature equally belongs to Jesus. But our context answers all purposes; see ver. 15—19. Was it to be wondered at that the heavenly hosts descended to worship Jesus when he assumed our nature? The fact proclaimed was "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good will to men." Oh, my brethren, "come into this secret"—this mystery of Godliness, and let all inferior or worldly attractions perish before it in your view. Tear every idol from your hearts. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

II. After meditating on the astonishing dignity of Christ, you would think nothing could be wanting to him; yet see what matchless grace—he is not satisfied without a *relative* fulness. Though we are absolutely "complete in him," yet he is not complete without his church; therefore the church is called "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The head cannot be complete without the members; as such you are dear to him. Having his spirit, you are, and ever shall be, his. Belonging to his body, you cannot perish; nay, as a part of himself, you must share his light, his love, his glory. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus will dwell in you and prepare you to be where Christ is. Then, my brethren, what an overflow of blessed consequences are entailed in this relationship! Why, are not "all things yours, if ye are Christ's?" Now, dare you touch the hem of Christ's garment in this view? Can your faith lay its hand on Christ? This is the point of comfort. Or are you timorous and fearful, being weak? Yet faith in his fulness will soon give you joy, and the joy of the Lord should be your strength. But if any of you are of a different character, if you are refusing Christ's headship and authority, there is but one law for you—you must be destroyed. Therefore, "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way; blessed are all those that put their trust in him."

III. There is a fulness of *congruity* or *fitness* in Jesus. Some of our greatest men are the least of men in practical fitness for office. But whatever could be required of Christ as a Mediator was so complete that nothing could be added or desired; and if you consider the various, distinctive, remote, and almost contrary qualities that centered in him, you must allow that Christ is eminently "the Wonderful;"* qualities, I say, which could not have met and combined if he had not been at the same time God and man † by an ineffable union. And here lay the very clearest essence of his Mediatorial character, that by the dignity of his Godhead he laid his hand on heaven, and by the attributes of humanity he allied himself to creatures of the earth. Here was a matchless adaptation to his work, the want of which no other high qualities could have compensated. You now behold him a sin-anointing lamb on earth, and a priest in heaven. The blood he shed on earth he could offer in heaven; and though a priest of such dignity, yet is he full of compassion, of lowliness, and meekness. Having participated in the circumstances of our nature, he knows how to pity us.

And now, my brethren, do we not feel ourselves lost in wonder that we should be interested in this glorious Mediator? that our eternal salvation should through him be even a possible event? But how much more if a certain one—if he actually has acquired "eternal salvation for us!" Oh, then, commit your souls into his hands. I beseech you, by the mercies of God, look unto him and be ye saved; for his is the hand of power, as well as of suitability; and his love is as great as his name is wonderful. "Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?" Such is Christ's excellency in this view that our meditations might rest upon it, as the cherubim were intent upon the ark, nay, so intent that the other glories of the holy of holies which surrounded them shared not their view.‡

IV. Christ's *dispensatory* and *communicative* fulness deserves your regard. My beloved brethren, your experience takes away this mystery: you know that all you ever received in grace was from his exhaustless store; just as all the bread that the

* Isa. ix. 6.

† 1 Tim. iii. 16.

‡ Exod. xxv. 20; 1 Pet. i. 12.

people in Egypt received was from Joseph; so out of this communicative fulness which dwells in Jesus "have all we received, and grace for grace;" but, particularly,

1. There is a fulness of natural supply. All the supplies of nature and providence are deposited by Jehovah in his hands. "All things," says Jesus, are delivered unto me of my Father," and therefore there remaineth nothing that is not delivered. If this were not "all things," in an absolute and universal sense, it would destroy the perfection of his Mediatorship. As all the affairs of Egypt were delivered over to Joseph by Pharaoh, so all the affairs of the world are committed to the hands of Christ. If therefore you look to Christ in sincerity for any one thing, you will look to him for every thing. He is the light of the morning and the light of life. He is Lord of the dews of Hermon. The showers that water the earth, the fountains in its bowels, and the influences of heaven, are his. The all-refreshing air which we breathe and the breath of our spiritual existence, the fire of life and the fire of divine love, are his. He is the fountain of all natural and spiritual knowledge, of civil, political, and divine power. He is the giver and the taker away of our lives; and he has "the keys of the invisible world." I ask not what our Freethinkers and Unitarians think of Christ; their hearts are not prepared to receive evidence of his greatness. But I ask you, my dear brethren, "What think you of Christ?" Do you conceive of him as Lord of all? Remember that "no one can call Jesus Lord,"* in his complex and universal character, but by a divine faith; nor can you have the sensible benefit of this fulness without this faith. Do not, therefore, evade the question, "What think you of Christ" as the fountain of supply? The world's misery is, that they see not, that they hear not, that they understand not this article of the Christian's faith. But why not believe in him who, while in this world, held all power in his hands, and who, after his crucifixion, reassumed his own life? Why not believe in Christ's providence, who fed 4000 and 5000 by a miracle, which was an emblem of sufficiency in bestowing all supplies of providence and grace? How ready are you to believe what you greatly desire, as to worldly good! How does your fancy paint all objects as certainties, and all this after you have been cheated a thousand times! In short, I fear there are some of you that believe any thing except what you ought to believe. But I turn from such to you who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." Has he not supplied your temporal wants to the present moment? and do you not see that, being sinful, ruined creatures, you could not have received even a drop of water to satisfy your thirst but by and through a Mediator?

2. There is a fulness of spiritual supply. The supplies of grace are communicated by him. This you know is especially noticed: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."† Although at times your common cares are excessive, yet I know that in your better moments you are most solicitous for supplies of grace. With what the scriptures declare on this subject there is a concurrence in what your hearts feel. You know that his grace has been hitherto sufficient for you; you know that scripture declares that Jesus was "anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure;" the Spirit of grace, personal and communicative; it could be no more measured than could the sands or the waters of the seas. Now you know that we want a fulness of every kind of grace. It is here as in providence, we have nothing properly within ourselves, all is communicated. Our breath and being are from without; our food is a gift; and so is every other mercy. None of the creatures would obey our command, nor stay though we bade them; "Jesus we know," say they, "but who are you?" Hence,

1.) You read in the divine word that there is a fulness of communicative gifts of the Spirit in Christ. These were poured out in a special manner and degree on the day of Pentecost. So true it was that "Jesus ascended up on high; he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," fully adequate to the important offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the church. In a lower degree the church is still supplied with gifts. Be it remembered that philosophy and human learning could never prove a substitute for these gifts; by these gospel gifts we can still answer those that reproach us for insignificance or ignorance. Some portion of a divine unction is bestowed even on our meanest prayer-leaders that affords evidence of this truth. And does not that light and consolation which you receive under the word preached witness to the fact? Nay, if conversions are not now numbered by thousands as formerly, yet seals to the ministry are not like the return of comets, at the space of some hundreds of years, but rather, I should hope, like the

* I have not in ignorance quoted this scripture, but suppose that the turn I have given it is allowable.

† John i. 16.

returns of the blessed sabbaths of the Lord. Oh! put up your fervent prayers that conversions to Christ may be like the "drops of dew from the womb of the morning;" and cease not, my dear brethren, to pray for a "door of utterance," to be given, that "the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified;" yet idolize no man for his gifts, but thank God on their account; and honour men only as the servants of Christ, as helpers of your faith, and praise God for his most excellent gifts to his church.

2.) You are accustomed, my brethren, to consider all the blessings of grace as coming from Christ's fulness. These are to be considered as resulting from the covenant of grace, which is "ordered in all things and sure." This covenant is made with Christ; it is deposited in his hands; and he is, in fact, the guarantee of all its blessings. "I have given him for a covenant of the people." All its blessings are upon the heads and in the hands of our Joseph, even on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren; and therefore, if any are blessed with them, they are blessed with them "in heavenly places in Christ." This doctrine is mystically represented to us in Zechariah iv. 2, 3, by "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top thereof; and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." "Now beyond doubt," says Mr. Scott, "this represents the abundance of divine grace for the use of the church;" for grace in Christ is one thing, and grace communicated to us is another; and though there is much mystery in the communication, yet the fact is undoubted, and it is equally undoubted that the grace is abundant: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." O, what a blessing is it, my dear friends, that this grace is abundant! that where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded! What a blessing is it that the deposit is not in us, to be misused, but treasured up in Christ! Hence you are exhorted to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. By this grace you "can do all things;" but without this grace from Christ you "can do nothing." May we not say that "God has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," as well as in grace and mercy? For consider, my brethren, for a moment, how excellent this plan is, of placing this fulness of grace in Christ, and not in ourselves. Our first parents had a stock, a treasure, committed to their own hands; but how, like the substance of the prodigal, was it wasted! We are not trustworthy; for, even when we design well, we have such a defect of wisdom and such a want of energy that grace is not used aright. This is, however, the best supposable case; but when we consider that Satan has access to our hearts, to disturb our peace, and, by injecting his fiery darts, to infuse a deadly poison into our spirits,—when we consider that we still have a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and frequently bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death,—we must perceive that we are unfit repositories of grace. Do but consider again how merciful this part of the divine conduct towards us is; for in the misuse of grace we should be very liable to the sin against the Holy Ghost, or at least of being vastly more criminal than we now are. Do but consider that herein God deals out to us his grace as he does our natural breath—as we need and require it! and that he deals out to us all other mercies in the same manner. Wherever exceptions appear, where men have something in hand, we see how little influence wise maxims and just principles have upon human conduct. Where the blessings of power, of talents, of riches, of beauty, of public favour, are possessed by the creature, how rarely is it that these blessings are used to their proper end! But in Christ our grace is not only a fulness of grace, but the security of grace for supply, for increase, for utility of all kinds; and it is dispensed as every one has need.

3.) When you further reflect that the grace which justifies the ungodly, and so introduces us into our Christian state, and the grace which confirms us in it, and enables us to persevere unto the end, are treasured up in Christ in all their fulness, to be dispensed to every member of his mystical body, you must admire the design.

(1.) In regard to pardoning grace. Is not this clear, "that the Son of man hath power to forgive sin," even a fulness of power? "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee;" many sins, as well after as before conversion; our sins of omission and commission, in thought and in act; our sins of ignorance, and our sins against light and against love. The covenant of grace has largely and fully provided for the sins of true penitents; one branch of this covenant, and a considerable one it is, runs thus: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The issue of this is, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is a

prime point in the gospel dispensation, and so it is marked by St. Paul: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." And where are these scriptures? Examine the sacrifices of the law, and say what was their import. Hear the prophet Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities," &c.; and, to show that the purpose was really answered, Jesus rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sent down his Spirit to give his seal to this doctrine. O, ye believing Jews, exult, exult at this precious fact; the sins which once separated between you and your God are pardoned. If you have a spiritual ear, oh, listen to the sweet sound of this word "pardon." O sweet word! abide with me for ever; let thy music cheer me in my sorrows, render my labours sweet, my long journey short, soothe all my disturbed passions, and give me peace and assurance for ever!

My dear brethren, do any of you seem to be cast out of this blessed lot? Do you go on sinning because there is no hope, or despairing because there is no pardon equal to your transgressions? But who told you that the plenitude of these pardons had failed? Is it not written, as high as heaven is above the earth so high are the Lord's thoughts and ways above those of his creatures? Does he not delight in mercy? Why then thy despondencies? Loose thyself from these bands of unbelief, O thou distressed captive to folly, believe and live for ever.

(2.) Whom the Lord pardons he justifies. And what is it to be justified? It must be something very precious that accompanies pardon. Well, then, I will tell you: pardon takes away sin; justification confers righteousness. Pardon relieves from punishment and no more: here is still no acceptable character for heaven, where positive righteousness dwells; nay, there would be none for the church below, which is its resemblance. The righteous Lord would not admit unrighteous persons, though pardoned, into fellowship with himself. The Lord's people that shall inherit the land shall be all righteous, that he may be glorified. Oh, then, listen to the truth as it is in Jesus; there is a fulness of justifying grace in the Mediator, by which "all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory." Yes, in "the Lord we have righteousness and strength." This is righteousness that fully answers to all the demands of the law of God. But, it may be replied, you say there is a fulness of righteousness in Jesus and we admit there is, but how is that made available to us? The scripture tells us that it is by imputation; by Jesus, in his great work, standing in our law-place as the head and representative of his people, acting for us under sanction of the covenant of grace, and according to its special tenure. He, I say, "fulfilled all righteousness," or brought in an "everlasting righteousness;" he paid the law's penalties, and fulfilled its requirements, not for himself, but for us. Therefore it is declared that he is the "Lord our righteousness." "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now this is the declarative state of the fact: "It is God himself that justifies"—he himself, having set forth Jesus to be a propitiation, even of his own providing and of his own accepting, for this end—he against whom sin had been committed by unrighteous persons. Yet there is a further consideration to be added, according to which the Lord's people are made a righteous people, and that is, by having holy and righteous principles implanted in their hearts by the Spirit of God. Hence they become fruitful branches in Christ the living vine, bringing forth and nourishing the fruits of righteousness so as to be acceptable to God through Christ, so evidencing their justification before men. This righteousness by faith is actually received, that is, by believing the testimony of God; and this faith, working by love in a new creature, moulds the soul into the divine image or likeness, and produces corresponding fruits and effects in the life and conversation. And this belief may well be called full; for it has respect to such a fulness of justifying righteousness in Christ as leaves no room for doubt to act upon. Is this the truth of God? O sinner there is hope! Is this the truth of God? O saint, rejoice! Is this the truth of the Gospel? Is Christ the end of the law to every one that believeth? O thou self-righteous pharisee, be abased; hide thy proud head, let shame cover thee, for it is thy only protection. O, cast away this refuge of lies, and say, with the holy apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."

(3.) Let every one of you further consider what blessed accompaniments attend this method of salvation: adoption into this family of God—nearness to him under all the endearing relations of sonship—all the promises of God—all the comforts of the Holy Spirit; all these flow to us through the mediation of Christ, and are enjoyed only in the way of believing in him. Then add to these the joy of standing at the last day immaculate and pure in the righteousness of Jesus. Whom God justifies and sanctifies, those he also glorifies; for there is also in Jesus a fulness of glory that

can suffer no diminution, that is susceptible of no loss, but rather an increasing fulness, expanding, abounding, and overflowing to everlasting day. Can any worldly glory compare with this? Try the comparison? What is the glory of the world? Does it consist in riches, which, by a thousand circumstances beyond human control, "make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven?" Is it to be sought in the fame of senatorial wisdom, or in the laurels that adorn the brow of the warrior? Must we look for it in the pomp of princes and the splendour of Majesty? We will not now insist on the fact that all the glory which dazzles at the distance, and after which men aspire with so much eagerness, is in the great majority of cases but so much gilded misery, and in all cases empty and unsatisfying. We will even allow for a moment that the charms with which imagination decks the glory of the world, in all or any of its forms, are not the wild and visionary flights of fancy, but that they are realities. Yet there is one point still which disqualifies all earthly good from a comparison with the blessings treasured up in Christ. Hear the language of inspiration: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," &c. But the glory which believers shall receive from the abounding fulness of Christ shall continue for ever. Because he lives they shall live also. Can you, believer, be poor, or wretched, or miserable, with such a hope? No, it cannot be; for with Christ you have all things even in possession that can promote your real interest, and, in reserve, "an eternal weight of glory."

The subject of Dr. Gill I have not pursued to the end; it is not necessary I should do so. My purpose will be answered if I have succeeded in giving an example of doctrinal discussion with intermixed address; and I hope you will find in it—first, a tolerably clear statement of gospel truths; secondly, the evidence and authority upon which that statement rests; and, thirdly, the address attached to them exciting the hearers by appeals, by interrogations, negative interrogation, comment, expostulation, personification, &c. Some attempt is occasionally made in this praxis on Dr. Gill, to excite admiration, love, desire, hope, fear, joy, and gratitude; it is confessedly but an attempt, and as such I offer it to notice. I shall only add one more example, and it is one of the very highest class of pulpit eloquence, from the pen of the justly celebrated Dr. Payson, of America. It is quoted from a volume of his discourses published by Holdsworth and Ball, which I take this opportunity of heartily recommending to the attention and imitation of all preachers who desire to see a revival of spiritual religion in this country.

Ps. xc. 8: "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."

The appearance of objects is very much affected by the situation in which they are placed with respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. You, O sinner, view sin according to the estimation of man, as something venial, and not deserving of eternal punishment; a deceived heart has led you to diminish its odious nature. But what is the light in which God beholds your sin? Even the clear light of his countenance. All your iniquities or open transgressions, nay, your secret sins, the sins of your hearts, are, as it were, placed full before God's face, immediately under his eye. He beholds them in the pure all-disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if you would see your sins as they appear to him against whom you have sinned (that is, as they really are), if you would see their number, blackness, and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, place yourself as nearly as possible in his presence, and look at your sins as it were with his eyes. You must place yourself and your sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance, where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle with insufferable brightness. And in order to this you must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where consequently the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived, and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

Attempt this adventurous flight. Follow the path by which our blessed Saviour

ascended to heaven, and soar upward to the great capital of the universe, to the palace and the throne of the Great King. As you rise, the earth fades away from your view. Now you leave worlds, and suns, and systems behind, and at length reach the utmost limits of creation. Here the last star disappears, and no ray of created light is seen. But a new light now brightens upon you; it is the light of heaven, which pours a flood of glory from its wide open gates, spreading continual meridian day far and wide through the region of ethereal space. Passing still swiftly onward through this flood of day, the songs of heaven begin to burst upon your ears, and voices of celestial sweetness, yet loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, are heard exclaiming, Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! A moment more and you have passed the gates, you are in the midst of the city, you are before the eternal throne, you are in the immediate presence of God, and all his glories are blazing around you like a consuming fire. Flesh and blood cannot support it; the body dissolves into its original dust, but your immortal soul remains, and stands a naked spirit before the great Father of spirits. Nor, in losing your tenement of clay, have you lost the power of perception; no, you are all eye, all ear, nor can you close the eyelids, to shut out for a moment the dazzling, overpowering splendours that surround you, which appear like light condensed, like glory which may be felt. You see, indeed, no form or shape; but your soul will perceive with intuitive clearness and certainty the immediate, awe-inspiring presence of Jehovah. You see no countenance, and yet you feel as if a countenance of awful majesty, in which all the perfections of divinity shine forth, beamed upon you whosoever you turn. You see no eye, and yet a piercing, heart-searching eye, an eye of omniscient purity, every glance of which goes through your soul like a flash of lightning, seems to look upon you from every point of surrounding space. You feel as if enveloped in an atmosphere, or plunged in an ocean of existence, intelligence, perfection, and glory, an ocean of which your labouring mind can take in only a drop, an ocean the depth of which you cannot fathom and the breadth of which you can never explore. But, while you feel utterly unable to comprehend this infinite Being, your views of him, as far as they do extend, are perfectly clear and distinct. You have the most vivid perception, and most deeply-engraved impression of an infinite, eternal, and spotless mind, in which the images of all things, past, present, and to come, are most harmoniously seen, arranged in the most perfect order, and defined with the nicest accuracy,—of a mind which wills with infinite care, but whose volitions are attended by a power omnipotent and irresistible, and who sows worlds, suns, and systems, through the fields of space, with far more facility than the husbandman scatters his seed upon the earth,—of a mind whence have flowed all the streams which ever watered any part of the universe with life, intelligence, holiness, or happiness, and which is still overflowing and inexhaustible. You perceive also, with equal clearness and certainty, that this infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, all-creating mind is perfectly and essentially holy—a pure flame of holiness, and that, as such, he regards sin with unutterable, irreconcilable detestation and abhorrence. With a voice which reverberates through the wide expanse of his dominions, you hear him saying, as the sovereign and legislator of the universe, “Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” And you see his throne surrounded, you see heaven filled, by those only who perfectly obey his commands. You see thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels and archangels—pure, exalted, glorious intelligences—who reflect his image, burn like flames of fire with zeal for his glory, and seem to be so many concentrations of wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and love—a fit retinue for the thrice holy Lord of hosts, whose holiness and all-filling glory they unceasingly proclaim.

And now my unhappy, unconverted hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colours, if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude, and criminality, bring them into this hallowed light, where nothing is seen but the whiteness of unsullied purity and the splendour of uncreated glory, where the sun itself would appear as a dark spot; and here, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring in all the light of his countenance around you, review your lives, and contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God in whose presence you are is the Being of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed. Keeping this in mind,

I. Bring forward what the psalmist in our text calls “*our iniquities*,” that, is, your more gross and open sins, and see how they appear in the light of God’s countenance.

Have any of you been guilty of impious, profane, passionate, or indecent, corrupted

language? How does such language sound in heaven, in the ears of angels, in the ears of that God who gave you your tongues for nobler purposes? Bring forward all the language of this kind which you have ever uttered. See it written as in a book; and while you read it, remember that the eye of God is reading it at the same time. Then say, Is this language fit for an immortal being to utter? Is this fit language for God to hear? Especially let every one of you enquire whether he has ever violated the third commandment by using the name of God in a profane or irreverent manner. If you have, bring forward your transgressions of this kind, and see how they appear in the light of God's presence. Sinner, this is the Being whose adorable name thou hast profaned, and who, bending upon thee a look of awful displeasure, says, "I will not hold him guiltless that taketh my name in vain." Oh, what an aspect of shocking, heaven-daring impiety!

Have any of you been guilty of uttering what is untrue? If so bring forward all the falsehoods, all the deceitful expressions, which you have ever uttered, and see how they appear in the presence of the God of truth, of that God who has declared that he abhors the lying tongue, and that all liars shall have their portion in the burning lake. Oh, what is it to stand convicted of falsehood before such a God as this?

Have any of you been guilty of perjury? If so, you may here see the awful Being whom you mocked by calling him to witness the truth of a known, deliberate lie. And how, think you, does such conduct appear in his eyes? How does it appear in your own? When you took that false oath, when you said, So may God help me as I speak the truth, you did in effect utter a prayer that his vengeance might fall upon you if what you swore was untrue. And will not God take you at your word? Will not the vengeance which you imprecated fall upon you? Oh, be assured that it will, unless deep and timely repentance and faith in Christ prevent. Nor is the guilt of those who share in the gain of perjury, and permit such as are employed by them to make use of it, much less aggravated in the estimation of him whose judgment is according to truth.

Have any of you transgressed the command, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy?" Such transgressions, I am aware, appear very trivial on earth; but do they appear so to Him who gave the command? Do they appear so in heaven, where an everlasting Sabbath is observed? Let those who have been guilty of such transgressions hear a voice from the glory around them saying, "I, to whom you are indebted for all your time, allowed you six days for the performance of your necessary labours, reserving but one for myself, but one to be employed exclusively in my service, and in working out your own salvation. Even this day you deny me; you consider my service as weariness, and therefore employ it in whole or in part in serving yourselves, thus proving yourselves to be wholly unqualified and unfit to enjoy an endless Sabbath in my presence."

Have any of you—we must propose the unpleasant question—been guilty of violating the commandment which forbids adultery and its kindred vices? If so, bring forward those abominations, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of the holy angels, in the sight of that thrice holy God, who has said, "I will come and be a swift witness against the adulterers, and they shall have their portion in the lake of fire."

Have you been guilty of fraud, dishonesty, and injustice? Have you in your possession any portion of another's property without the owner's consent fairly obtained? If so, bring forward your dishonest gains, hold out the hands which are polluted by them, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of God, who hath said, "Let no man over-reach or defraud his brother in any matter, for the Lord is the avenger of all such."

Have any of you been guilty of intemperance? If so, look at yourselves and see a drunkard, a rational being self-degraded to a level with the beasts, and wallowing in the mire of his own pollution. How would you appear in heaven, in the society found there?

Plead not your exemption from *these*; your hearts, naturally corrupt, will not abide the penetrating light of God's countenance. Let us then,

II. Bring your hearts into heaven, and there lay them open to view, and see how they will appear in that world of unclouded light and unsullied purity.

And oh, how do they appear? what a disclosure is made, when the dissecting knife of a spiritual anatomist lays open the human heart, with all its dark recesses and intricate windings, and exposes the lusting abominations which it conceals, not to the light of day, but to the light of heaven! My hearers, even in this sinful world the spectacle which such a disclosure would exhibit could not be borne. The man whose heart should thus be laid open to public view, would be banished from society; nay, he would himself fly from it, overwhelmed with shame and confusion. Of this every

man is sensible, and therefore conceals his heart from all eyes with jealous care. Every man is conscious of many thoughts and feelings which he would be ashamed to express to his most intimate friend. Even those profligate, abandoned wretches who glory in foaming out their own shame, these make some reserve, and tell not every thought within. And if this be the fact—if the heart laid open to view would appear thus black in this dark sinful world—who can describe the blackness which it must exhibit when surrounded by the dazzling whiteness of heaven, and seen in the light of God's presence, the light of his holiness and glory? How do proud and self-exalting thoughts appear when viewed in the presence of him before whom all the nations of the earth are less than nothing, and vanity? How do self-will, impatience, and discontent with the allotments of providence appear when viewed before the throne of the infinite Sovereign? How do angry, envious, and revengeful feelings appear in the eyes of the God of love, and in those regions of love where, since the expulsion of rebel angels, not one such feeling has ever been exercised? How do wanton, impure thoughts appear? But we cannot pursue the loathsome, sickening enumeration. Surely, if all the evil thoughts and wrong feelings which have passed in countless numbers through any one of your hearts were poured out in heaven, angels would stand aghast at the sight, and all their benevolence would scarcely prevent them from exclaiming, in holy indignation, Away with him to the abodes of his kindred spirits in the abyss! To the Omniscent God alone would the sight not be surprising. He knows, and he only knows, what is the heart of man; and what he knows of it he has described in brief, but terribly expressive, terms, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart." Let it be remembered that in God's account thoughts and feelings are actions, that a wanton look is adultery, and hatred is murder.

III. Having thus viewed your actual sins of heart and life, as they appear in the light of heaven, let us take a similar view of the sins of *omission*—which are far more numerous and by no means less criminal offences—of which you are guilty.

Recollect all that you have been told of God's infinite perfections, of the works he has performed, and the blessings he has bestowed upon you. Look at him once more as he appears in the eyes of holy angels, and then say what he deserves of his creatures. Does he not deserve, can you avoid perceiving that he deserves, all their admiration, love, gratitude, and obedience? Does he not deserve to be loved, feared, and served, with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength? This you are sensible is what his law requires; and can any thing be more equitable? Can we withhold our heart and services from such a Being without incurring great and aggravated guilt? Yet this you are justly chargeable with. Your whole lives present one unbroken series of duties neglected, of favours not acknowledged. And oh, how do they appear, when you review them in the light of God's countenance? When you see before you your Creator, your Preserver, your Benefactor, your Sovereign, and your heavenly Father,—when you see in him to whom all these titles belong, infinite excellence, perfection, glory, and beauty,—when you see with what profound veneration, with what raptures of holy grateful affection, he is regarded and served by all the bright armies of heaven, and then turn and contemplate your past lives, and reflect how they must appear in his sight, can you refrain from exclaiming, with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes"? Shall not your shame and confusion be full? Nay more, when you see what God is, and how he is worshipped in heaven, and then look at the coldness, the formality, the want of reverence, with which you have approached him in prayer, and listened to his word, you must feel conscious that should he call you to judgment you would be struck dumb!

But the duties which we owe to God are not the only ones which we are required, and which we have neglected, to perform. It is also required that you love your neighbour as yourselves, and this includes a great number of subordinate precepts, which belong to our whole intercourse with our fellow-creatures. How have you acquitted yourself in all the relations in which you stand, in all their ramified natures and kinds? Oh, we must say we have left undone many things which we ought to have done.

Nor do our sins of omission end here; there is another Being whom we are under infinite obligations to love, and serve, and praise with supreme affection. This Being is the Lord Jesus Christ, considered as our Redeemer and Saviour, who has bought us with his blood. We are required and sacredly bound to feel that we are not our own, but his, to prefer him to every earthly object, to rely on him with implicit confidence, to live not to ourselves but to him, and to honour him even as we honour the Father. Every moment, then, in which we neglect to obey his commands, we are guilty of a

new sin of omission, nor have we the smallest excuse for neglecting to obey these commands. Even the angels, for whom he never died, regard him as worthy to receive every thing which creatures can give. Much more, then, may it be expected that he for whom he has done and suffered so much should regard and heed him as worthy. But how grossly have we failed in this particular! How must the manner in which we have treated his beloved Son appear in the sight of God! How does it appear to us when we contemplate him as he appears in heaven, when we see the place he fills, when we recollect that in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and that to him are unceasingly ascribed wisdom, and strength, and blessing, and honour, and glory, and power?

The subject before us is far from being exhausted, and very far from having justice done to it; but we must leave it, and hasten to a conclusion. Before I close, however, permit to ask whether you cannot now perceive the reason why your sins appear more heinous and criminal in the sight of God than they do in your own? Have you seen or heard nothing which convinces you that they are far more numerous and aggravated than you had supposed? If so, you have seen nothing aright. You have not seen your sins in the light of God's countenance: for, had you seen them in that light, they would have appeared in some measure to you as they appear to God himself. When Isaiah had seen Jehovah on his august throne, he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone: I am a man of unclean lips." Cannot you perceive that, so placed, you would be like affected, should your sins appear in their true nature? If so, allow me to say that a day is approaching in which you will be constrained to see your sins as they appear in the light of his countenance. When that day arrives, his Eternal Son, the appointed Judge, will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with all his Father's glory blazing around him, seated on a throne of resplendent whiteness, with a countenance from which the heavens and the earth will be affrighted. He will call the whole race before him, and there cause their lives to pass in review, expose all their secret sins, lay open the utmost recesses of all hearts, while the flood of celestial light which pours itself around him will, by contrast, cause their blackness to appear sevenfold more black. Then no more complaining of the strictness of God's law, or of the severity of the punishment which will be pronounced upon transgressors, will be heard; for every mouth will be stopped, and all the world—except the Lord's people—will stand guilty before God. Oh, then, be persuaded now to come to the light; make the Judge your friend; his blood and righteousness can effect your salvation if now sought for.

Lavington's sermon on Luke xiii. 8, which I have quoted at some length at p. 85, is also an excellent specimen of continued application, though the divisions are observational; I here add an outline by a living preacher, in which the divisions are interrogatory. It is founded on Ex. ix. 20, 21, "He that feared the word of the Lord," &c. The text suggests some important enquiries.

I. Whether you have not valuable property which is yet in a state of insecurity. All are not rich in houses and lands, in silver and gold, &c. But even the poorest possess property of immense value. Who can count the value of an immortal soul?

II. Whether you can afford to lose this property; we can easily conceive of persons whose property is so various, and extensive, that they can lose a part without any inconvenience. Though they lose much, yet they have enough remaining; but if you lose your souls, what have you left? Men have sometimes been deprived of all their earthly property, and yet have been enabled to make up their loss, &c. But the loss of the soul is irretrievable, &c.

III. Whether you can hope to secure this property by any other means than by regarding the word of the Lord. There is but one covert from the tempest of divine wrath. There are indeed many refuges, but the storm of ordinary affliction shakes them. At the approach of death they fall and crumble to the dust. The covert provided will avail you nothing unless you take refuge in it. There were houses enough in Egypt to shelter all that were in the fields, but unless they fled to the houses they were left unprotected. It is not enough that there be a place of refuge if you do not fly to it.

IV. Whether you have a moment to lose in availing yourselves of the counsel of the word of God. The Egyptians might say with careless levity, "How unlikely is it that there should be a storm of hail in Egypt; the day too is calm and serene, and it is preposterous to talk of a storm!" But the storm was coming. And is not death making fearful ravages? How many during even the past week have fallen under the

stroke of mortality? And these were not all aged, not all sickly, not all poor; some of them were young and healthy, &c. Are you quite sure of another week, another day? And if not, how can you rest while your souls are in jeopardy? I am willing to believe that not many of you utterly despise religion, &c. You admit that God has a claim upon you. You would not for a thousand worlds be found at last among the neglecters of the gospel. You hope to be converted before you die. But you are lingering, procrastinating, and in the meantime the bands of sin are gaining strength. Why do, you hesitate to cast yourselves at the foot of the cross? When will the claims of God be stronger than now? When will the cords of iniquity be weaker? Shall I tell you of the terrors of the almighty?—the wrath revealed against ungodliness? &c. O let me lead you to Calvary. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We see from this subject that there is prudence in piety.
2. There is no folly so great as want of piety.
3. The source of this folly will be found in the neglect of God's word.

Whole discourses constructed on the principle of entire or uniform application, and ably supported, I consider the *ne plus ultra* of pulpit excellence. It is not the study of school eloquence, nor a parade of words, or clustered ornaments of speech, much less a theatrical assumption of character, that can furnish the requisite qualifications for maintaining such a mode of address. It is rather the boon of heaven, a blessed unction from above, a large measure of which was imparted to the great apostle of the Gentiles, as his writings abundantly manifest; and, if I may be allowed to select a single instance of modern date in which this gift was eminently possessed, I would point you to George Whitefield. He held a command over the minds of his hearers like that which superior spirits are supposed to possess over the inferior. It would, however, be wrong to suppose that any gift is exclusive which the wants of mankind render necessary. This excellence has its degrees; and some share of it may be expected wherever a ministerial talent is imparted, where means are used for its attainment, and especially where the preacher is blessed with strong natural as well as gracious affections; for as an argumentative talent is improved and sanctified by the general influence of the gospel, and a natural sagacity in observation is increased by grace, so the benevolent affections are susceptible of immense improvement from those powerful considerations which divine grace impresses on the heart. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," is a direction which applies to the present as well as to past ages of the church; and, influenced by an ardent desire to win souls to Christ, you may hope for considerable success.

While the art of conducting a whole discourse by continued application is worthy your highest ambition, it will also be proper in your practice to intersperse some portion of this excellency of speech throughout every sermon, in the manner of my example, p. 127. The importance of obtaining a just idea of this essential of a discourse must, I think, be apparent. Observation marks your wisdom, argumentation your talent, and close address your Christian feeling. By the first you enlighten the mind; by the second you convince the judgment; and by the third you influence the will and affection. Shall I say that the greatest of these is persuasion? There is a perfection in every thing. As I said of observation and of argumentation that each might, in a proper manner and degree, fill an important place in every discourse, and must do so, so I may also observe that there is a manner and degree of throwing in all the qualities of address or application, and this will be its savour, its "sweet incense." This may be done at the pauses of your discourse, or at some periods of your argument, by the inter-

position of a few sentences, by an ejaculation, an interjection, an expostulation, an interrogation, an appeal, an abrupt digression, &c. In short, you must be ever on the watch to find an opening for application, and let your arrangements be so formed as to favour such openings. Keep the object in view when your text is read, and let its magnetic power be felt throughout, taking care however not to wander too far, but soon return to the place where you broke off. Some people may call these the excrescences of a discourse, but I call them its beauties. It is not necessary that I should prescribe what you are to introduce at these intervals ; your own judgment and Christian feeling, assisted by an acquaintance with the real state of those you are addressing, will suggest what is most appropriate. Consider for what end you stand before a congregation, whose message it is you bear, and what is its subject (Christ crucified*) ; and, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," and feeling that the "love of Christ constraineth you," you will not fail successfully to "persuade men ;" you will be at no loss what to introduce on such occasions.

When I consider what thousands of valuable sermons are almost lost for want of this excellence, I am grieved ; and I am especially grieved that in so many of my own very little of this savour has been seen, and even in such as have cost me much labour in preparing ; but what avail laborious investigation, sound argument, and correct diction, if this be wanting ? The people are but little moved, and anxiously wait for the end of the discourse. On the other hand, look at those ministers who excel in pathos, and who occasionally incorporate address or application ; by what crowds is their ministry attended ! and that by enlightened as well as by less cultivated hearers. Here then is the attractive power, and here the sanctified magic of their speech, and nowhere else. Pure nature loves it ; while man is man he will own its power. I am not discountenancing other excellences by urging the cultivation of this, but only putting in a just claim to that which is so essential to a gospel minister and the success of his ministry. Ministers, like others, are too much the creatures of habit and the slaves of custom ; and, whatever track a minister first takes, from this he cannot be easily removed, until at last he justifies himself by pleading that he is too old to alter his manner of preaching. How careful then should you be, my young friends, to take the right course at the first ; and if, like others, you feel the force of example, to take for your exemplars those that excel in close preaching and just application.

It has indeed been matter of debate whether persuasion or address should be conducted in this way or reserved for the last part of the discourse. I have formerly pointed out the latter as the proper place ; and when I come to treat of perorations, in these Lectures, I shall do so again. I say an argument should generally be first concluded before you make the appeal from it ; but even here a little occasional address may be employed, for this keeps the audience attentive throughout ; and the arguments on which your address is founded will not only be better received, but will also be longer remembered, where they are interspersed with suitable applicatory remarks,

* Dr. Williams's *Christian Preacher* is a very valuable work—it is formed chiefly by bringing together some very valuable treatises, which we should have had some difficulty in collecting, and perhaps we should not otherwise even have known their names. One of these treatises is called *Preaching Christ*, by the great and good Mr. John Jennings, the tutor of Dr. Doddridge. This treatise, in reference to my present subject, I beg leave most earnestly to recommend to your notice, and also Ambrose's *Looking to Jesus*.

which is somewhat like striking the iron while it is hot. How sensibly is reserved address weakened in Brown's and Scott's Commentaries! These respectable authors accomplish their object of keeping their exposition or arguments from interruptions; but then at the end of a chapter what a confused heap of reflections and observations are hurried upon us! Here, instead of feeling their force, we are full of perplexity for a time to know what truth each reflection or practical observation is intended to apply. The great charm of Henry's invaluable Commentary, on the contrary, arises from his peculiar skill in applying every part of the truth as he proceeds in a manner at once simple, natural, and pointed. His arguments and criticisms, though often profound, generally judicious, are rather insinuated, or introduced for the purpose of being immediately applied, than drawn out in form. In perusing this work the author is forgotten, while the heart acknowledges his power, or rather the moral power of the truth.

Reserved address is also in danger of becoming inefficient by exhaustion of the preacher's strength, or the lapse of the appointed time for preaching, to which I may add that if a preacher excels in argument he relies more upon this arm than he ought to do, and becomes habitually indifferent to address: and here he loses himself.

In order to prevent these and other bad consequences, let the object of this Lecture give the turning point of decision as to the question at issue. Address can hardly be put out of its place except it be wholly excluded; its purpose will be fulfilled wherever it appears, if presented with any tolerable degree of judgment. Therefore let nothing of this high value be left to the chapter of accidents. The preacher must not trust himself; he must fix a firm resolution, and as firmly keep it, that his argumentative part shall not be too long, so that full time may be left for the persuasive.

Having now passed through the nine textual divisions, I shall conclude the present lecture by presenting to you a view of the whole at once, that you may thereby clearly perceive the points of difference, and on studying a text be assisted by a reference to the scheme in determining which kind of discourse will be most eligible.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE NINE KINDS OF DIVISION.

(FOUNDED ON MATT. IV., 19, 20.)

First, the Natural division, on the 19th and 20th verses.

- I. The gracious call of Christ to follow him.
- II. The obedience paid to it.

Secondly, the Accommodational kind, on the 1st clause of the 19th verse.

- I. The effectual call.
- II. Its gracious design.
[This kind would admit of several other forms of expression.]

Thirdly, the Expository division, on the whole of the 19th verse.

- I. The call here spoken of.
- II. Its nature.
- III. Its operation.
- IV. Its design.

Fourthly, the Distributive division.

CHRIST'S CALL MAY BE CONSIDERED,

- I. In reference to those disciples to whom it was primarily addressed.
- II. In reference to all men as sinners before God.
- III. As it respects the work of the ministry.
- IV. As to the exercise of our particular talent.
- V. As to our general duty to promote Christian interests.

Fifthly, the Regular division.

- I. The person of Jesus (who calls).
- II. The call itself.
- III. Its end or design.

Sixthly, the Interrogative division.

- I. Who is the person commanding? question 1
- II. What is the import of the command? 2
- III. To whom is it addressed? 4
- IV. To what end is it given? 5

N.B. The other questions here are inapplicable, as is often the case.

Seventhly, the Observational plan.

- I. Christ's great work is the calling of his people; Col. i. 13, and Luke xix. 10.
- II. As he designed to use instruments in the establishment of his cause, so he also selects them.
- III. The instruments he chooses are often such as in the eyes of men appear the most unsuitable—poor, untutored fishermen, &c.
- IV. The instruments chosen always willingly obey the call.
- V. It is the highest honour to be employed in the service of Christ.

Eighthly, the Propositional division.

- I. Christ only can effectually call sinners.
- II. The call to be effectual must be irresistible. [In supporting this proposition, care should be taken to show that there is no violation of free-agency. Hos. xi. 4; Ps. cx. 3.]
- III. Christ's call is always to glorious objects.

Ninthly, the Continued Application.

- I commence (the preacher will say), my brethren, by assuming that the call of Christ in the text, though primarily addressed to Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, with an especial view to the apostleship, is in effect addressed to every one of you. "Follow me" is the gracious language in which he now speaks even to you who are still in an unconverted state before God. Hence,
- I. Seriously consider your present condition.
 - II. Behold the love of Jesus in giving you the gospel call and all its advantages.
 - III. Reflect seriously upon the consequences of compliance or refusal.
 - IV. Consider the immediate and pressing necessity of decision.

LECTURE X.

THE TOPICS, THEIR USES, PRACTICAL REMARKS, ETC.

DR. WATTS speaks disrespectfully of the Topics, as being necessary only to barren minds. "Persons of any invention or imagination need not go knocking at the door of the topics to help them out of their difficulties." I think it would be no difficult task to show that he himself, and others of equal talents, have borrowed assistance from them : and, if Cicero and other Roman pleaders thought it no disgrace to use them, we, who are so confessedly inferior, need not be ashamed to follow their example. Claude saw their utility in Roman hands, and rendered them convertible to Christian purposes. In various ways Dr. Blair made very great use of them, and Mr. Simeon still more. But Claude and Simeon laid them under no further contribution than to aid observational preaching. On an attentive consideration, however, it will appear that they are capable of furnishing HINTS FOR AN EXORDIUM, A BASIS FOR DIVISION, MATTER FOR AMPLIFICATION IN EVERY KIND OF DISCOURSE, and of supplying SOME OF THE BEST THOUGHTS FOR A PERORATION. In fact the eight interrogatives stated in the Lecture on Interrogative Division, and these Topics, will go very far to aid us in the investigation of all truth, and the examination of subjects in general, in laying open their several parts, qualities, and adjuncts, adjusting the circumstances of things, estimating their comparative value, marking their peculiarities, and reverting to the intention of persons' words and actions : so that we may by these assistances almost exhaust any subject whatever. We can by them make right appear right and wrong appear wrong, as well as disclose things that were hidden under other things or seen but very imperfectly. The Topics therefore form an arm of power which it would be imprudent to neglect. They are a magnifying glass to view things more perfectly ; and we need not knock at the door of the Topics to beg for their assistance, for they throw open their advantages and invite our inspection.

Claude's notice of these topics is introduced in the following enumeration :—"To open more particularly some sources of observations, you should carefully remark every thing that may help you to think, and facilitate invention. You may rise from species to genus or descend from genus to species. You may remark the different characters of a virtue commanded, or of a vice prohibited. You may enquire whether the subject in question be relative to any other, or whether it do not suppose something not expressed. You may reflect on the person speaking or acting, or on the condition of the person speaking or acting. You may observe time, place, persons addressed, and see whether there be any useful considerations from these. You may consider the principles of a word or action, or the good or bad consequences that follow. You may attend to the end proposed in a speech or action, and see if there be any thing remarkable in the manner of speaking or acting. You may compare words or actions with others similar, and remark the differences of words and actions on different occasions. You may oppose words and actions to contrary words and actions, by contrasting either speakers or hearers. You may examine the foundations and causes of words or actions, in order to develop the truth or falsehood, equity or iniquity, of them. You may sometimes make suppositions, refute objections, and distinguish characters of grandeur, majesty, meanness, infirmity, necessity, utility, evidence, and so on. You may advert to degrees of more or

less, and to different interests. You may distinguish, define, divide, and, in a word, by turning your text on every side, you may obtain various methods of elucidating it."

TOPIC I.

RISE FROM SPECIES TO GENUS.

These are terms of natural history, and on this subject very well express the thing intended. *Genus* means a class of being, comprehending under it many *species*. For instance, the word *animal* is a genus, because it agrees to many sorts of living subjects, as man, horse, dog, lion, whale, bird; consequently, all these several names, man, horse, &c., are what we call species, under the genus *animal*. In the same manner an idea expressed in a book may be a general idea or subject—a genus, comprehending under it many ideas. Or we may first meet with a branch, a species, in the course of our reading, and in this case, if we would extend meditation, we pass from the species to the genus to which this species belongs. So also in studying a particular text. Suppose, for example, we take Ps. l. 14, or or Ps. cvii. 22. Here the *particular* offering of thanksgiving may lead us to reflect on the nature and design of sacrifices in *general*, and to observe that the offering of an appointed sacrifice is the immediate commerce of a creature with his God, an action in which it is difficult to judge whether earth ascends to heaven or heaven descends to earth,—that while in almost every other act of religion the creature receives of his Creator, in this the Creator receives of his creature,—that the Lord of the universe, who needs nothing, and who eternally lives in rich abundance, exercises amazing condescension in being willing to receive offerings at our hands, &c.

In ordinary cases the observations founded on this Topic will only occupy a small portion of a sermon, but sometimes they will furnish the *outline*, as in the case of observational discourses, where particular facts, &c., are made the groundwork for enlarging on those general truths from which they arise. In other cases the *subject* of discourse may be furnished by this Topic. Thus, for example, suppose the text to be, as above, Ps. l. 14. Having briefly illustrated the grounds and obligations of thanksgiving, and turned attention to the dignity of sacrifices, the subject might be cast into the following form:—

I. Consider the general history of sacrifices, with their appendages.

1. From Abel's time to that of Moses, including the age of Job.

2. From Moses to Christ.

Notice in both parts the quality of the things offered, the persons of the offerers, the acceptance they received, with all the specialities of appointment with respect to them.

II. Their real design, and their instructive lesson to man. Their design was to give a perpetual intimation "that without the shedding of blood" there could be "no remission of sin." Though this was not recorded in any form of words till the Mosaic dispensation arrived, yet the patriarchal ages received divine intimation upon the subject. This I judge to have been the case because such an institution could scarcely have entered into the mind of man without some previous intimation from heaven. Upon the natural view of things there was no connection between the act of shedding an animal's blood and offering the victim on the altar and the pardon of sin. But the sacrifice met the same acceptance as when offered by divine appointment in subsequent times, and every thing happened just as it would have happened upon a divine appointment. Hence we conclude that some previous intimation had taken place; and by whatever means the ancient church acquired its ideas of sacrifices and their typical intention, the fact is undoubted that many of the earliest saints had clearer views on the subject than millions of professors in the present day. By faith Abel offered an

acceptable offering. The Lord smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice. So Abraham, and others in succeeding ages, appear to have had increasing light on this interesting subject, corresponding to its true intent, while the heads of families were considered the proper persons to officiate.* But in the time of Moses the doctrine of mediation, which sacrifices implied, was regularly revealed in the ritual of the tabernacle service, and particularly in the person and office of Aaron, the great type of our blessed Saviour, of which the apostle Paul gives us a very luminous view in his epistle to the Hebrews, as exhibiting the gospel of the church in the wilderness, as the shadow of good things to come, as being perfectly sufficient for saving faith to act upon, which faith was really operative in the hearts of many, though (as in our day) ineffectual as to others. "These all (that is, all the saints, as well under the patriarchal as the Mosaic economy) died in faith, not having received the promises (not having lived to see their full accomplishment in Jesus), yet being persuaded of them, and embracing them," as their own property and enjoyment, as a pledge of the grace by these things intimated.

III. Their perfect adaptation to these ends, exclusive of all others.

Here it may be necessary to show that sacrifices were the true mirror of the mystery of redemption, of Christ's being substituted for us, a real vicarious act, dying for us to relieve us from the guilt and punishment of sin: thus far the offering. Return again to this mirror of redemption, see the divine ordination, co-operation, and complete acceptance. The Almighty ordains every thing pertaining to the ritual with the greatest precision: accompanies the act of sacrifice by the holy fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering; the Shechinah, the emblem of the divine presence, resting on the ark of the covenant within the veil, while the divine acceptance is portrayed by the burning incense in Aaron's hand before the ark, and the blood which he shed or sprinkled over the mercy-seat. It is true that this is a silent acceptance, yet real; for when God disapproves he destroys, of which we have an instance in the case of Nadab and Abihu. In this mirror we see Jesus, the sin-atoning Lamb, fore-ordained in the divine counsels, voluntarily co-operating in the plan of redemption. Jehovah laid on him the iniquities of all the redeemed. We see Jesus actually "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree." We see also the divine Father's acceptance of his sacrifice demonstrated in his raising his Son from the dead, receiving it as a sweet-smelling savour, and exalting him to the highest glory in the heavens, as the reward of his unparalleled humiliation and obedience.

This representation and perfect analogy, ordained of God for our instruction, is divinely adapted to its end, which could not be effected so well in any other manner, if indeed it were at all possible; for we always conceive of things most perfectly by our sight, and what we perceive by our natural eye, as a figure, is the securest way to our mental sight or understanding. Thus, by tracing back our thoughts to an ancient economy, we see more clearly the system of the new. Had these lessons been given us in language only, or merely in the form of doctrinal statements, this subject would have been to us, ignorant creatures, in a great measure incomprehensible. But when we see the victim slain according to law, when we see Aaron officiating for the people, and confessing the iniquities of the people over the head of the scape-goat,—and when we see him carrying the blood of the slain goat into the most holy place, and sprinkling it upon the mercy-seat, &c., we are furnished with a view, a conception, of the mystery of redemption, which no words could convey to us. In like manner the mystery of Christ's union with his people could not be so well comprehended as it is by the simile of the vine and its branches. In short, the wisdom of God is much displayed in the medium or means of instruction afforded us in the Levitical economy; therefore those who despise the means undervalue the wisdom that devised them.

IV. The light in which we should view them in our day.

Here it may be remarked that we must study the law in order that we may the better understand the gospel. We shall thus, as it were, bring back into existence and reduce to profit a much neglected part of holy writ. We shall better understand the ground of our faith in Jesus. As preachers of the gospel we shall be better furnished with the materials of discourse in the types and shadows of ancient times; we shall be enabled to find and preach Christ from passages we, perhaps, thought the proper province of Jewish rabbies only.†

Another example of rising from species to genus may be founded on

* See Outram on Sacrifices, translated from the Latin by my friend Mr. Allen, of Hackney.

† See Outram on Sacrifices, and also Magee on the Atonement.

James i. 9 : "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." In the exordium give a short view of the text. The character is one of *low degree*, perhaps in worldly circumstances, or in gifts, or in the esteem of the world, perhaps also of the church ; but chiefly it is one who is so in his own eyes, Prov. xvi. 19 ; Matt. v. 3. Let him rejoice in the divine favour, Isa. lxvi. 2 ; let him rejoice in his future prospects, James ii. 5. Now contrast this poor man's state with that of the rich man, chap. i. 10, 11. You may then intimate to the congregation that from the term *brother*, in the text, you are led to consider the great doctrine of adoption, by which believers are all made brethren in Christ Jesus. You may then divide upon the subject (not the text) by describing the nature, the reality, the importance, and the consequences of adoption.

In the first part you may observe that an adopted child is one taken by a rich man from a family not his own, introduced to his house, regarded as his own, and entitled to all the privileges and blessings belonging to this relationship, agreeably to the practice of most ancient nations, and not unknown in our own country. Moses was an adopted child : Acts vii. So we find in this case, as in the last, an appropriate analogy to represent to our minds a most important gospel truth—viz. our real adoption into the family of God, we having been by nature aliens and outcasts.

In the second part you may give the earliest instances of this—viz. God's favour to his own people, as in Gen. vi., wherein the name of sons of God is first mentioned. Noticing several patriarchs, you come to Abram, the father of an adopted nation, the figure of the more spiritual family, of whom God says, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." And with respect to this people, when in Egypt, God says to Pharaoh, "Let my son go that he may serve me." Next show that prophecy confirms this relation, Hos. i. 10 : "In the place where it is said, You are not my people, then shall it be said, You are the sons of the living God." Then pass to the new Testament, and show how the types and prophecies took their real effect under the gospel economy, as by John i. 12 ; Eph. i. 5 ; Rom. viii. 14, 17 ; 1 John iii. 2. And we are also said to be baptized into this name, *eis to onoma*.

Then again, for the third part, its importance is very easily perceived. A real relationship to God must be of the most interesting kind, eternal in duration, always increasing in its benefits.

Lastly, as to the consequences that immediately flow from this relation. Our heavenly Father provides, sustains, protects, instructs, corrects, cherishes, speaks to his children kind and comfortable words, &c.

I am aware that it may be objected, in reference to both these examples, that more appropriate texts might have been selected, and that there was no occasion to bring in these points by a side door. Such a method certainly should not be adopted without good reason, nor adopted with frequency. The preacher must of course consult his own discretion in this matter. Cases may sometimes occur in which there will be an evident propriety in adopting this method of discussing a general subject. For instance, might not the preacher be lecturing on the fiftieth Psalm ? and then to consider sacrifices in general would be proper enough. Or suppose he were lecturing on the epistle of James, the same liberty might be permitted.

I shall now cluster together several other examples, without enlargement ; as for instance,

Dr. Dwight, vol. i., p. 234, on Job xxiii. 13 : "He is of one mind," &c., establishes the general doctrine of God's decrees. Thus he,

- I. Explains the doctrine.
- II. Proves it.
- III. Removes objections.

Also Dwight, vol. i., p. 271, on Jer. x. 23 : "The way of man is not in himself," &c., establishes the general doctrine of God's sovereignty ; and this he proves by a series of undeniable facts.

The late Mr. Potts, of Crispin Street, on Jonah iii. 2, runs over, in a whole volume of 430 pages, all the doctrines of the gospel, and shows how a minister ought to preach them. This is indeed going rather too far.

Dr. Blair grounds on the text Gen. xlii, 21, 22, a general dissertation on the power of conscience. His division comprises the following observations :—

- I. That a sense of right and wrong is inseparable from human nature.
- II. That this produces an apprehension of future punishment.
- III. That though stifled for a time, during prosperity, yet in adversity it will revive.
- IV. That, when awakened, it leads us to conclude that every infliction of evil is a punishment from heaven.

Blair on Ps. xxvii. 3, "Though a host should encamp against me," &c. From this text he takes occasion to discourse on the virtue of fortitude. He considers,

- I. Its importance.
- II. Its grounds.
- III. Its assistances.

The same author on John xxi. 21, 22 : "Lord, what shall this man do?" gives a general essay on curiosity as to our neighbour's affairs.

The same author on Ps. cxxii. 6—9 : "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," &c., treats generally on love to our country.

These examples will, I think, be amply sufficient, and I shall now proceed to offer some cautions and directions.

1. Take care of the abuse of this plan of preaching : for it does not discover good sense often to go extensively into the general subject, which those that have talent for it are very apt to indulge. Dr. Blair, in his Lectures, vol. ii., p. 319, says : "I do not by any means say that it is necessary in every discourse to take in all that belongs to the doctrine of which we treat. Many a discourse is spoiled by an attempt to render it too copious and comprehensive. The preacher may, without reprehension, take up any part of a great subject to which his mind may at any time lead him, and make that his theme. But, when he omits any thing which may be thought essential, he ought to give notice that this is a part which for the time he lays aside."

2. I have already suggested (p. 144) that when this plan is adopted it is always necessary to give a short view of the text by way of explication, and it may be well to hint that you may at another time treat the text more fully. Allow me to add that, as the view you take may be short, so it ought to be ingenious—a complete compendium.

3. You will find that the division of these examples is not founded on the text, but on the subject ; for, when you have a doctrine or general truth to state and to discuss, the division must entirely bend to the subject. Thus Dr. Dwight's Body of Divinity has the division of each article formed to suit the subject in hand ; and the doctor is unquestionably right in his view of propriety.

4. When you do not found a discourse upon this Topic, but treat your

text in some of the ordinary ways, a little reflection on the Topic will often suggest some pertinent observations for the conclusion of your discourse. For instance, in concluding a sermon on John vii. 27, "We know this man whence he is, but when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is," you might make these general observations :—

1. That a depraved heart offers objections against religion, without understanding the subject, or venturing to believe it.
2. That ignorance adopts any thing, however unscriptural or unreasonable.
3. That the whole system of infidelity is but a vain bravado, devoid of every consolation. (*Masillon's Sermon, sur la Carême, tom. 4.*)

Also, when this text, Ezek. xxxvi. 32, "Not for your sakes do I this," &c., is treated in the expository manner, you may draw from it at the end these two general observations :—

1. Though God never punishes a nation without its deserving it, yet he very often blesses a nation when it does not deserve it.
2. A sense of these undeserved favours should work upon men's hearts, and stir them up to repentance.—*Bishop Beveridge.**
5. Never enter into a general subject without very clear views and adequate arguments.

TOPIC II.

DESCEND FROM GENUS TO SPECIES.

If elegance, combined with utility, be desirable, this Topic must be allowed to possess no ordinary claim to our attention. If the last affrighted you with a difficult ascent to elaborate discussion, this will delight you by its easy descent into a luxurious vale, profuse of sweet variety, and where you may gather wholesome fruits on every hand, to deal out plentifully to all the diversified wants of your beloved people.

That this order of discourse partakes of the same properties as the distributive of the present Lectures I readily admit; but as Claude thought it proper to treat of different views, and also of the second Topic, its counterpart, so I hope I shall be excused in following his example. It is true, the examples generally come to the same result; but I conceive some variety lies in the way. Perhaps we may find in our present examples *different degrees* as well as *different kinds* of subject; and I reiterate my desire to render your aids as ample as possible.

Claude exemplifies the use of this Topic by referring to Ps. cxxiii. 2: "Behold! as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters," &c. Here you may aptly observe, in masters with regard to servants, and in God with regard to us, the following senses of the phrase :—There is a hand of *beneficence*, a hand of *protection*, a hand of *correction*, and sometimes the hand is employed as a hand of *direction*. All these ideas afford rich and beautiful illustration. Again, on the phrase, "until he shall have mercy on us," or, "until he succour us." Until he send some gracious word (Ps. cxix. 82) to *cheer* me in my *affliction*—to *enlighten* me in my *darkness*—to set my *soul* at *liberty*—to *deliver* me from my strong *enemy*, &c.

Dr. Blair, on Ps. xxvi. 8: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thy honour dwelleth." Upon this text he vindicates public worship in a very masterly manner by considering it in different aspects.

* These last two articles are taken from Robinson's *Claude*, vol. ii. 22, 23.

I. With respect to God—he claims it as his right.

II. With regard to ourselves—it is most needful.

III. With respect to the world—it is inviting—it is healthful to the state of society.

Mr. Jay's sermons, vol. i., p. 247, Amos vi. 1: "Woe to those that are at ease in Zion." Here the genus is *false ease*, deceitful as the calm that precedes an earthquake. Mr. Jay's discourse is a most cutting one, full of admirable comment. He describes those that are at ease,

I. In selfish insensibility.

II. In infidel presumption.

III. In vain confidence.

IV. In practical indifference.

This lamentable state frequently follows a lively and active profession of religion. Having cooled in their affections, and settled down into this false ease, they are alike unaffected by promises and threatenings; they know both, but care for neither. If we preach to a people that never had the gospel in their possession, they commonly receive it with avidity. You may build places of worship, and easily fill them. But in the other case you may shut up those that are built, or turn them to some other purpose. This is exactly the case in the east, or rather north-east, of London. Here, seventy or eighty years ago, nay, say only fifty or sixty years since, religion was triumphant; now there is no need of more than one place of worship where seven before were filled, one of which is converted (O sad change!) into a brewer's store; another is used by a mathematical society; two or three others are either entirely deserted or only so thinly attended that we might write **איכבוד** *ICHABOD* upon their walls. The only relief we find in this sad state of things is that there are "a few names in this Sardis" who still are alive to God, that some thousands of children are under Sunday-school education, and Christian Instruction Societies are establishing. At present a district so low in divine things is hardly to be found in the British dominions. What course of events are we to look for? This is an important enquiry. Shall not our bowels be moved, like those of the weeping prophet at some tokens of divine anger? or shall we still hope that God may in mercy "revive his work," in the midst of a population of a hundred thousand souls? And what is remarkable there is none to cry aloud among the ministers of the district: if they lament it is in secret.

Jay's sermons, vol. ii., p. 31, Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed." Here the author presents us with a novelty,—two divisions, the one textual, the other topical. Our second Topic is introduced after the explanation of the first textual head. The *genus* is *false hope*, which is the ruin of thousands, and, to speak in terms suggested by the Topic, the *species* are the hopes of the *Pharisee*, the *worldly man*, and the *Antinomian*. The vanity of a false hope is shown,

I. By the insufficiency of its object, as to the worldly character.

II. By the weakness of its foundation, as to the Pharisee.

III. By the falseness of its warrant, as to the Antinomian.

After Mr. Jay has textually explained the second general head, he again adopts a Topic—viz., the third, but this it is not to our present purpose to consider. In his Short Discourses, vol. i., p. 165, on Heb. xii. 16, 17, the character of Esau, Mr. Jay divides by our second Topic, and discusses by the sixteenth. Then again, to make the subject one of continued address, he skilfully proceeds as follows:—

I. View Esau in his original state, and compare your privileges with his privileges.

II. View Esau in the surrender of his privileges, and compare your sin with his sin—voluntary and base.

III. Consider Esau in his misery, and compare your doom with his doom.

You will, even by my quotations from Jay, perceive that he excels in discrimination of character, and in severity of remark as to what he conceives to be wrong; but he is perhaps sometimes too bold.

Burder, vol. iv., p. 73, Luke xxiv. 34: "The Lord has risen indeed." Consider the text as the language,

I. Of wonder.

II. Of certainty.

III. Of joy.

This, though simple, is yet elegant, and as just as it is delightful; and the more closely it is examined the better it will appear.

The following furnishes the next example, on Heb. xi. 13: "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Christians are so,

I. With respect to the company and treatment they meet with.

II. With respect to property and state—they are the despised of this world.

III. With respect to their stay and continuance.

Blair on Eccles. xii. 8: "Vanity of vanities," &c. The preacher here discovers the different characters who join in the complaint.

I. The *sceptic*, who quarrels with Providence.

II. The *peevish man*, who is discontented with his condition.

III. The *licentious character*, groaning under miseries in which his vices have involved him.

IV. The *wise and good man*, making a due estimate of sublunary things.

These ideas seem to be suggested by Saurin's division of Eccl. ii. 17, which see, tom. ii. 336, in French.

Again, Blair on Phil. iv. 5. *Moderation* is the genus. Then, he says, exercise moderation,

I. In your *wishes*.

II. In your *pursuits*.

III. In your *expectations*.

IV. In your *pleasures*.

V. In the *indulgence of your passions*.

Again, vol. v., p. 119, *England* is the genus. Consider it,

I. As the seat of *private enjoyment and happiness*.

II. Of *true religion*.

III. Of *liberty and laws*.

In these instances we see a single Topic furnishing complete *divisions* and *discussions*.

My next instance is from Bishop Burnet, on Ps. cxliv. 15: "Happy are the people," &c. This *happiness*, then, is the theme or genus: hence, alluding to the preceding verses, he says,

I. Happy is Great Britain, in being so secured from breaking in (that is, from foreign invasion).

II. Happy in the security of liberty and property.

III. Happy the English, who are secured from going out (that is, who are not banished, or harrassed into voluntary exile), alluded to ver. 14.

IV. Happy the English, who have no complaining in their streets (no perversion of public justice, no invasion of the rights of conscience, &c.)

V. Happy the English, whose God is the Lord, who have the Christian religion in its reformed purity.

Isa. liii. 10: "He shall see his seed." He shall see them,

- I. Removed and brought nigh.
- II. Educated and brought up.
- III. Supported and brought through.
- IV. Sanctified and brought home.
- V. With utmost approbation and delight.

Acts vii. 22: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." The subject or genus is the right use of human learning. Then say,

- I. Use not learning unnecessarily.
- II. Use it not vain-gloriously.
- III. Use it not proudly.
- IV. Use it not heretically.
- V. Use it not too profoundly; but,
- VI. Use it with humility, moderation, sobriety, and as a handmaid to Christ.

Learning is a jewel of high value, and is seen to be so when this last rule is observed, but we are disgusted to see it degraded to the purposes of foppery and display.

I have hinted in this Lecture that something might be found to render this topic the vehicle of variety, by forming particulars in degrees as well as in kinds. This I will now endeavour to exemplify. On the temptations of Christ, Matt. iv., a transition is made to the temptations connected with the ministry, and issuing in clerical depravity; and this has no less authority than Father Masillon.

I. A scheme to live like gentlemen: "Command these stones to be made bread." This danger belongs to the first entrance on the ministry.

II. Presumptuously to aspire after preferment: "He set him on a pinnacle of the temple." Thus he excites a vain hope that God will be glorified by rash enterprises. "He shall give his angels charge." This belongs to an aspiring minister, the second degree.

III. A boundless desire of riches and honour in elevated stations, by which a man is induced to submit to abject services for the sake of elevation: "All this will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Happy had it been if this were only a supposable case; but, alas! it is too common. Cardinal Wolsey here seems to be drawn to the life; and modern times will give copies of that vile original. Happy is the man that endures temptation, who preserves his integrity, his simplicity, his disinterestedness, who enters on and pursues the honourable track of the blessed apostle Paul, who would rather labour with his hands for his support, than impair his independence.

I now turn to a more agreeable picture—degrees of excellence and blessedness. The instance is taken from our excellent Dr. Watts, founded on Ps. lxxv. 4: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."

I. Happy are those who, though sinners by nature, are yet brought so near as to be within the sound and call of his grace, whether as a nation such as England, or as living in the vicinity of public worship, or as placed in religious families. This is the first step of blessedness.

II. Happy are those who have been taught to improve their outward advantages of nearness to God, so as to obtain reconciliation with him by the blood of Christ (Eph. ii. 16, 18), who are weary of their old ways, and experience the happy change. This is the second step of blessedness.

III. The blessedness of saints and angels in the upper world. They are fully satisfied with the divine favour; they draw very near; they behold the divine Being in righteousness; they behold him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And even here there doubtless exist different degrees of favour: it cannot be imagined that Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Paul, will have no more glory than the thief on the cross, or the passing infant that scarcely looks upon this world. The very idea of reward, so much

promised, must have regard to the circumstances under which the state of trial was passed.

To these three steps of blessedness two others are added, but as they are somewhat mystical I omit them. And here we must remark that, while the twenty-fourth Topic refers to degrees, the descending to their consideration from a general subject, as in the foregoing example, constitutes the application of the second Topic; they come from the same point; they discover grades of subject—different views, if you please, of the same character at different points of time. The idea of gradation is also perfectly scriptural, as Job xvii. 9; Ps. lxxxiv. 7; Prov. iv. 18; Isa. xxx. 26. Examples might easily be formed upon these passages in a skeleton, by making time and circumstances the instruments of division. The Pilgrim's Progress is formed upon this idea, and experience attests its propriety: it is delightful to note the steps by which growth in grace is effected. To mark progression strongly, all the stages of the Israelites, in their journeyings towards Canaan, were very accurately and distinctly noted in history, as by Numbers xxxiii. The stations there named had no importance; the floating sands of Arabia might else have covered them in everlasting oblivion; but as points of progression in God's church they were important.

Having proceeded, as I conceive, far enough in examples, I take my leave for the present by offering two or three directions.

1. Always before you commence branching ideas take care to prove that the general one from which they descend is true, otherwise your building is set upon a bad foundation. I may add, it should not only be true but very important, sufficient for such various branchings of discourse.

2. As these branches are pretty much formed in the imagination, care must be taken that they be sober, just, natural, and scriptural.

3. It is very certain that this Topic, like some others, will either wholly divide the discourse or a principal branch of it. Nothing more than a little reflection is necessary to point out its proper use in different cases. Sometimes a great number of particulars may be clustered together in one period; and even here they answer well; for instance, Paul so places them, Rom. viii. 38: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" these are all branchings of opposing difficulties, each of which might have been separately amplified; but as here placed they are calculated to produce a very powerful effect upon the mind.

4. But the most common and best way is, when intending to divide wholly upon the Topic, to explicate the text in a neat and luminous exordium, in which every essential point might be passed over in ten minutes, or a little more. Suppose the text to be Ps. cxix. 77: "Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live." Say,

The text is a prayer for God's tender mercies, dictated by an enlightened mind, in the spirit of humility, conceived in faith and expectation. As a prayer it is a pattern to us, so expressive as to include nearly all that we need. It is clear that all our expectations in prayer must be founded on God's "tender mercies;" for we can claim nothing. Eph. ii. 4; 1 Pet. i. 3; Titus iii. 4—7. Observe, further, that we have continual need of these tender mercies, and therefore ought to seek the bestowment of them to help us in every time of need (Heb. iv. 16), that we may live, in the highest sense, both in this world and in the next. Having amplified these ideas, you will say that the Lord's "tender mercies" are of several kinds, suited to our several wants and necessities: as,

- I. Preserving mercies, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16; Ps. xxiii. ult., &c.
- II. Preventing mercies, Ps. xxi. 3, and lix. 10.
- III. Delivering mercies, Ps. cxvi. 8, and lxxxvi. 13.
- IV. Restoring mercies, Ps. xxiii. 3, and xix. 7; viz., converting.
- V. Pardoning mercies, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2; Heb. x. 16, 18, &c.
- VI. Enlightening mercies, Eph i. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 6.
- VII. Guiding mercies, Ps. xxxii. 8, and xxxvii. 23.
- VIII. Comforting mercies, Ps. cxix. 76; Isa. xii. 1.
- IX. Communion mercies, 1 John i. 3; John xiv. 18.
- X. Fructifying mercies, Ps. i. 3, and xcii. 14.
- XI. Prayer-hearing mercies, Isa. xlv. 19; Ps. lxxv. 2.
- XII. Persevering mercies, Job xvii. 9; Phil. ii. 6.
- XIII. Eternal mercies, Ps. ciii. 17; Isa. lxxv. 17.

The above example is of course far too extensive, but as many particulars may be taken as are proper, and a good sermon might thus be formed. In sketching out a discourse of this kind, if our thoughts begin to show too much luxuriance, it is easy to prune away the superfluous branches; and, indeed, if this be not done, the sermon will be all branches and no fruit.

LECTURE XI.

TOPIC III.

REMARK THE DIVERS CHARACTERS OF VIRTUES AND VICES.

OF the discoveries which human ingenuity has been enabled to make whether in the natural, the moral, or the intellectual world, those seem to give us the greatest delight which are of the more boundless kind. In the first of these three orders we identify the starry heavens; in the second, the moral sense in its restored state, eternal in its nature and consequences; and, in the third, the pleasures of the intellectual faculties. The study of these affords the most refined delight, while such objects of pursuit as immediately find their end and bearing are always esteemed of inferior consideration. They may be useful, and consequently of considerable comparative importance. Some intellect was necessary to construct a spade, but then it scarcely admits of improvement; some intellect is necessary to describe it, yet its description is very simple, and soon ended. The case is widely different when we come to conceive and describe the perfections of God, "the operations of his hands," the truths of his word, which are of eternal duration, or even the high qualities and virtues of his favoured people—their "works of faith and labours of love." These open a range of description perfectly boundless; consequently the pleasures we feel in these studies and descriptions possess a character of infinity in which the mind, if duly spiritualized, delights to expand itself either in meditation or description; and the more excellently such subjects are drawn or described the more exquisitely will our own feelings be affected, or the feelings of others that read or hear them recited. If subjects in religion admitted of no description, if they were incapable of beauty, harmony, and just proportions of light and shade, they might remain true, but they would fail to yield us that delight in contemplating them which we now derive from their variety, their infinity, their symmetry and proportions, and their wise adaptation to the end proposed. But in experience we find that divine subjects are generally of blessed elasticity and expansion, beyond all the powers of man to describe. Theology admits and cherishes description, for the glory of God, for the profit and delight of man; and a preacher may well be ambitious to excel in this

almost sublime art, whether this be confined to occasional touches, comprised in a few sentences, or in one division of a discourse, or extending itself to a whole sermon.

When you introduce a subject to an audience, it is natural, at the very first, not only to say what the subject is, but also what are its circumstances, qualities, adjuncts, &c. Description abounds every where, in the word of God and in the works of men. Orators and poets, naturalists and philosophers, all describe their respective objects. Here we have a trial of genius. One man will set the object so completely and clearly before you that the representation seems to live, and move, and act, or he represents the thing so that it affects you deeply, and makes you feel most sensibly, or it excites your admiration at its truth and justness; while a bungling speaker or writer knows not where to begin, which points of description should be prominent and which should not, nor where nor when he should end. There is such mist and confusion throughout as to excite your disgust. It must therefore be inferred that a poor describer must be a poor preacher; and hence it follows that to remove any defect in this point much study is necessary. The mind must be disciplined in the use of this topic; it must occupy for a while the chief attention. Theory and practice must be equally and connectedly attended to. Scripture begins and ends with this beauty. The first thing that was ever committed to writing, as I venture to presume, was that beautiful description of the creation from the pen of Moses;* while the last pages of holy writ give a lively and animated description of the New Jerusalem, with its pearly foundations, its superb walls, its gates, its ophir-streets watered with the river of God, and its ever-during verdure. But how many descriptive beauties the whole volume contains who can declare? Upon these the Holy Spirit breathed to give them immortal life and excellency. My present duty, however, is to show the *forms* that are adapted to receive such description as frail mortals can conceive and express, to give the most lively examples of the divine art, and to offer some directions how to draw outlines and appoint situations for the exercise of such talent.

Mons. Claude limits this third topic to the display of all the qualities and characteristics, whether good or bad, belonging to any virtue or vice in human conduct; but I may be permitted to extend the consideration beyond *virtues and vices* to the *divers characters* of any thing required to be described, and I am of opinion that a whole discourse may with the utmost propriety be formed on this topic, though, as it must frequently turn upon a single word or term, there is some degree of difficulty attending it. In divisions upon a text you have words and sentences to discuss. Upon a general subject you have amplitude enough: one thing makes a first part, another a second, and so on. But here perhaps you have but a single word or idea to bear the description. Still a division may take place upon circumstances respecting that one thing, or that idea; you can take up that one thing in a delineatory, in a philosophical, or in an historical manner. As, for instance, in a description of sovereign mercy, you can describe it in its *source*, its *operations*, and its *end*. Again, as to the sacred scriptures, you can speak of their *author*, *subject*, and *reception*. As to the divine light, you may describe its necessity, its medium, its residence, and its author, &c.

* [Such was the prevailing view with many in our author's time; but more recent inquiry has shown its incorrectness.]

These I call descriptive outlines, whatever other view I may take of them. They lead to a descriptive discourse, of the lower order perhaps, and requiring little more than faithfulness to the professed design, that it may not run off into any other species of discourse, and that the facts themselves upon which the description is established may not be distorted. Any thing of this kind that the preacher may think proper to adopt will answer the purpose, provided it preserve the text and subject pure, or that some word be found in it which is the index to the sense. The discourse will on such plan have a great deal of regularity and beauty, as exhibiting character in its "form and feature."

The higher kind of descriptive discourse is, it must be allowed, of more difficult execution ; but there are few difficulties which will not yield to persevering effort. When once the idea to be described is well fixed in the mind, the task is half performed. The preferable way, in early practice, is not to venture a whole discourse of this kind, but a part only, viz., one division, allowing the rest to be textual. For instance, 2 Thess. iii. 5 : "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God," &c. Here let the first and third parts be expository and the second descriptive :

- I. The sovereign agent in the text—the Holy Ghost.
- II. The blessing to be communicated—"the love of God."
- III. The ends for which this grace of love is dispensed.

In the second part you may attempt a description of the love of God as the ruling principle in the heart of believers ; and to the best of your ability present such a portraiture of the subject as may at once interest and edify your hearers.

Claude furnishes thirteen subdivisions on the subject.

1. This love has its seat in the heart.
2. Possesses the whole heart.
3. Occupies the chief place.
4. Exists without measure or subordination, without bounds or partitions.
5. Sets bounds to every other emotion.
6. Is attended by humility and holy fear.
7. Imitates the divine love in its expansion and extent.
8. Consists in obedience.
9. Is inflamed under the rod of correction.
10. Is free from superstition.
11. Is peaceable.
12. Is always active.
13. Is spontaneous.

But there are other important particulars which should be named, viz., that this love is the sum of the first division of the commandments, that it is implanted in regeneration, that it is the fruit of the Spirit of God, and that without it there can be no religion.

Mr. Simeon observes that the whole might be reduced to three heads, so as to include the entire subject, as follows :—

1. This love is supreme, possessing the whole heart.
2. Uniform, as well under corrections as under smiles.
3. It is obediential, influencing to active performance.

Thus I have pointed out an introductory plan.

"Little boats must keep near shore ;
But larger boats may venture more."

When, however, genius and experience will justify it, then occasionally divide wholly upon the topic. Thus, take for an example Mr. Simeon's discourse on Eph. ii. 4 : "But God who is rich in mercy," &c. Now I allow

that this sermon is expository, but it is exposition by way of description, and that of the most beautiful and evangelical kind, and I claim it for my present purpose.* This divine mercy is displayed in its source, its operations, and its end, as I stated before in this Lecture, *et inter alia*. It is too well known to be preached in Mr. S.'s own form; yet, for an example, I state it more largely.

I. In its source. It arises out of the riches of the divine mercy, out of the abundance of his love (textual phrases). His mercy and his love, of all his perfections, are his treasure, Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7. They direct themselves to outcast man (Mic. vii. 18); and this was the very purpose of Christ's advent and sufferings. O fountains of benevolence, ever refresh us!

II. In its operations.

1. It quickens us "when dead in sins;" see context.

2. It raises us up to sit together in heavenly places, &c. In adoption, 1 John iii. 2. [What a beautiful theme of description!]

III. In its end—that God might exhibit these first-fruits of his mercies after Christ's ascension to all future ages, as an earnest of greater things. We are hereby encouraged to preach the gospel, assured that divine grace will appear exactly according to this pattern in all its parts and bearings. "His arm is not shortened; his ear is not heavy, his purposes change not," Mal. iii. 6. His heart still burns in the riches of sovereign grace and love. But in the ages of eternity the greatest display will be exhibited to admiring worlds. What a blessed work will it be to recount the wonders of his love, the riches of his mercy, in the heavenly Jerusalem, to all eternity! and blessed are ministers at this day in being authorized to tell sinners of such replete riches of divine love.

From such a specimen as this, contracted and marred as it is, as well as from other similar instances, you see that description is true eloquence, at least an important branch of it; and we need not have recourse to Demosthenes or Cicero, nor to any such names, to instruct [us] in this art. The gospel has resources within itself amply sufficient for the purpose.

Take another description. The river of grace, Ps. xlv. 4: "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

The following was written many years ago, and designed for delivery on board ship to a party of friends on the Thames. I omit the introduction and conclusion, and retain no part but the descriptive, in which I attempt to show the analogies of a river and divine grace.

1. A river is small in its beginnings. From the declivity of a hill it leaves the parent spring. It finds a ready course along the flowery meadow, where the playful lambs frisk over its narrow bounds or sip its salubrious stream. Soon, joined by other little streams, in its meandering way (for it loves association), it becomes capable of watering the garden of an industrious cottager, or filling his daughter's pitcher for domestic uses. Joined by other kindred streams it turns a mill, maintains a family, and grinds the bread-corn of a village. Again, having courted greater alliances, it carries a lusty boat, and conveys the farmer's corn to some distant mart. At length it receives other rivers to widen and deepen its copious stream; it majestically meets the tide of the sea, and becomes capable of the honour of bearing ships of 2000 tons burden, laden with the rich produce of the eastern and western worlds. Lastly it is engulfed in the mighty ocean, and aids the traffic of empires. Sweet emblem of ever-growing grace! small in its beginnings, yet not despised by him from whom it flows, nor ought it to be by man. How small it may be none can tell. Its course may be long concealed from common observation. When it first appears it may attract but little notice, it may serve but few purposes, and those of the humblest order of good; but ever gaining strength by new accessions, receiving grace for grace, it will manifest its divine origin to the praise and glory of its sovereign source. How large it may become, when destined to glorious deeds of usefulness by our Immanuel, none can venture to predict. The feeble child of grace shall become as David, and David as the angel of the Lord, Zech. xii. 8. Thus Paul first lisped, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. But, gaining daily strength, he became a mighty champion for

* Great numbers of sermons are of this mixed character, expository and descriptive; and much notice should be taken of them with a view to the present subject.

the truth, and blessed the nations with the message of eternal love. At the end of his glorious career we find him testifying to the glory of divine grace in its most copious measure: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord shall give me at that day"—when grace shall be exchanged for glory.

2. A river is pure in its nature, as the sources whence it arose, unlike the stagnant lake, whose offensive exhalations, contaminating the air, often produce diseases around its borders. Divine grace is pure in its nature and loathes defilement. Divine grace purifies all things, but itself is incapable of pollution. This is one of the wonders of grace, that, although coming continually in contact with sin and corruption, it never can be vitiated by it. As a natural river, although liable to meet pollution, has a power sufficient to cleanse itself, to preserve itself in its purity, so grace in the heart is in no danger though in the midst of pollution. The final triumph is secure; it shall wax stronger, and prove the force of its influence in casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience to Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.

3. A river is peaceable in its course. It makes no such noise in the world as the rapid torrent or foaming cataract. In its peaceful course it gives no manner of alarm either to the lamb or the timorous dove: nay, the silence of night itself is not interrupted by its motion. So divine grace in the heart, like the wisdom that cometh down from above, is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated," the perfect reverse of all those fierce passions, anger, wrath, envy, pride, malice, jealousy, and revenge. It confers the temper of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and teaches to live peaceably with all men. And, as the river confers its benefits in silence, so the Christian's works of mercy are free from noise and ostentation, and are characterized by modest silence and reserve, which adds so much to their worth. His grace is pure as the crystal stream, and his peace flows like a river.

4. A river is perpetual in its motion, unlike other phenomena in nature, which are ever changing their appearances and actions. The earth fructifies in the summer. The rain pours down for a season, and then clears away. The land-floods prevail a few days. The hail and the snow are of short duration. Light interchanges with darkness, and summer with winter. The appearances of the heavens are perpetually inconstant: now they are clear from every spot; in a few hours covered with blackness, and darkness, and tempest. The lightnings flash and the thunder rolls for an hour; but the river glides with a stately and constant motion, by a law of its own, which time and circumstances do not alter, giving a figure of the invariable purposes of God its Maker, who suffers no shadow of a change; like him, it faintheeth not in its course, nor waits for the sons of men. It might at first appear to be a hazardous assertion to say that grace in the heart is as regular as the stream, and perhaps it would be more hazardous to say it is not: appearances are, indeed, often against the sentiment of its regularity; but this we observe, the work of grace is often very deep in the heart, too deep for human inspection, and for human judgment. The believer's life is very justly called a hidden life (Col. iii. 3), more concealed at some seasons than others; like the river Guadiana, in Spain, which for a long space (15 miles) hides itself in the earth, so that a superficial observer of it might pass a wrong judgment, supposing that it ceased to be; but it shows itself again, and keeps above ground for the remainder of its course. So we might suppose that Peter's grace failed when he denied his Lord; but Jesus declares otherwise: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith (or grace) fail not," Luke xxii. 32. This accords with the testimony of Paul: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. But with what propriety could that work be said to be carried on which in fact suffered suspension? With what propriety could it be asserted, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands (or a gracious person) shall wax stronger and stronger?" Job xvii. 9. With what propriety is another figure used for the same purpose, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day?" The rising sun, as he mounts the horizon, may, for a little time, be hidden behind a cloud; but still his course is not interrupted; so the Lord, in his work of grace, will work, and none shall hinder; he will perfect that which concerneth us, and will work in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power. The Christian in his course shall be like the flowing stream.

5. A river is irresistible in its motion. It is true the stream of Jordan was by a miracle thrown back to make a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over; yet in the common course of nature the stream is *irresistible*; its weight of water from above bears down all opposition. This property resembles divine grace in the heart;

it overcomes all opposition from our rebellious nature, and makes its subjects willing in the day of power, Psal. cx. 3. "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly" in the work of subduing the heart to the obedience of Christ. Thus persecuting Saul of Tarsus was reduced to the obedience of the faith; the stout-hearted lion became so gentle that a little child might lead him in perfect safety. Thus divine grace casts down every imagination and every high thought. Prejudice, and even enmity itself, like the bands of Samson, are broken off in an instant.

6. It is devious in its course. How various are its windings and turnings! what a great distance will it sometimes go, and return almost to the same spot! Again, for a while, it takes a straight course, then a curved one. Through what variety of scenes it passes! It now washes the lawn of a palace, then the cottage of a revered saint; again, it visits the habitation of sorrow, and joins its murmurs to the throbbing breast of the disconsolate widow; now it aids the woodland's echo, and the sweet sound of the nightingale's note; at length it finds its course through the open country, where the bleak wind or sudden squall for a while disturbs its peace, and fills the boat's company with fear and disorder; but, wearied with this course, it returns to the peaceful vales, its chief delight to give lessons of moral and religious instruction to the contemplative mind, to the thinking few who visit its banks to search for wisdom in the works of God, and from the flowing stream as a subject, to pour forth their praises to the God of rivers. What a portraiture is this of that divine Providence which to the saints is the handmaid of grace! The windings and turnings of divine Providence in the life of a Christian are truly astonishing, and these we are commanded to notice with reverential regard: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deut. viii. 2, &c.), and all the ends which he had in view thereby towards thee. No course was ever more devious than that of the children of Israel in the wilderness, yet we are told this was "a right way," (Ps. cvii. 7); yes, the "ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them," Hos. xiv. 9. What windings and turnings there were in the life of Joseph, yet these were under a divine direction. For a long time he understood them not, yet every turn was marked with grace, and led to his advancement. What turnings and windings were in the life of David! yet these he was led to see were necessary parts to that well-ordered covenant which God had formed in his favour. But what history so interesting as that of *a man's own life*! yes, it is sweet to view, over and over, the windings and turnings of divine Providence that brought you within the range of gospel blessings. With a little attention you will perceive that all providences were subservient to this end. Every removal, and every new connexion that marked your earlier life, brought you nearer to this; and every awakening or afflictive providence prepared you for the benefit. The marvellous, in common biography, obtains the chief place; but that which only tends to temporal interests, though it were from a cottage to an empire, as in the instance of Catherine of Russia, is hardly worth recording, while that which issues in grace deserves to be written in letters of gold, or engraven with the point of a diamond. Learn, then, hence, one of the sweetest subjects for praise and thanksgiving to thy God.

7. A river is *copious, open, free, and diffusive*. It is abundantly copious, beyond all the wants of nature and her various tribes; it never seems the less, though the cattle of a thousand hills quench their thirst from it; it is open and free to every application of every kind; nay, it seems to invite all creatures to partake of its salubrious streams. It is diffusive of its blessings to the greatest possible extent; not content with yielding its benefits by its shortest course to the sea, it makes as many turnings as it can in order to extend its beneficence: if its course might be run in a hundred miles, it seeks a thousand. It glides from city to city, and from province to province, to satiate the thirsty, and to enrich the soil, John i. 14. We readily recognize in this description that river which makes glad the city of God, that fulness of grace from which all receive that belong to the family of heaven.* O ye copious streams of grace, you far transcend the fairest type of nature, as heaven your source transcends the world below! I hear the voice from heaven say, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come you to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy without money, and without price (Isa. lv. 1); yea, let every one that is athirst come, and let him take of the waters of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Yes, here is enough and to spare, and "blessed are those that thirst, for they shall be filled." But to what purpose is this grace bestowed? is it merely to satisfy the receiver? No it is to become in the heart a diffusive principle, that will prompt it to communicate its blessings to others with the most gene-

* A river abundantly enriches the lands contiguous to it; such lands are often worth three times as much as other land.

rous affection. It was in this manner the woman of Samaria, having received of the grace of Christ from his own lips, could not rest till she had conveyed the information to her neighbours. And as soon as Paul experienced this grace in his heart he immediately convened the Jews of Damascus, and preached to them that grace which he had felt, and proved to them the Messiahship and grace of the Lord Jesus; but Damascus could not set limits to his zeal, nor scarcely the Roman empire itself. This noble impetus carried forward a Whitefield to the western world, as an angel with the everlasting gospel in his hand, to spread the savour of his Master's name to distant tribes of men: and will it not be the more general operation of this principle that will give universal extension to gospel blessings? Yes, when the Lord speaks the word, great shall be the company of the preachers, Ps. lxxviii. 11. Such are the benefits which the streams of divine grace convey, like a river, copious, free, and diffusive. Let none presume to restrain or confine these blessings to themselves. Freely you receive; freely give. Never ought we to rest till the gospel, like the river of Egypt, overspreads the face of our own country, at the least; then we may hope that the overflow will reach beyond our bounds, and bless the nations of the earth with the all-satiating streams of life.*

8. A river seeks its passage along the humble valleys or the level plains, and shuns the hills, the mountains, the cliffs, and rocks: these elevations suit not its humble nature. So grace often passes by the wise, the mighty, and the noble, the elevated philosopher and self-conceited Pharisee, and seeks the humble in heart. "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way," Ps. xxv. 9. Heaven-taught, the believer shuns the precipices of pride and ambition. He leaves to others to climb the rugged rocks and lofty mountains, at the greatest hazards, to explore whatever may be gratifying to their vanity. He seeks and loves the valley of humiliation; there sweet peace and tranquility mingle their soft pleasures, and soothe his thoughts to contemplations heavenly and divine. The blessed Redeemer chose a humble course, and sanctified it to all his followers, and commended it to their choice: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 29. Yes, he that by original right was above all principalities and powers, the very image of the invisible God, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, to give a pattern worthy of all imitation to his followers. Here, Christian, is wisdom worthy of your choice. Let sweet humility be thy constant guide; like the river, seek thy course along valleys, where he that loves you has appointed you to be, and where you shall be safe and happy; while others pierce themselves through with many sorrows, and learn too late that eminence and wisdom are rarely found together.

9. A river, except swollen by accident, keeps within its proper bounds; it only asks leave to pass quietly along, and take no more room than is necessary; nay, it often suffers its bounds to be diminished, by one and another covetous being, who steal from its shore to add a few feet to their adjacent property. We have an interesting similarity to this figure in the Christian, and the example I would adduce to prove it is my favourite, Paul. "I have learnt in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (Phil iv. 16); and to show that it was not his peculiar trials that made this necessary with regard to himself, but that it was a Christian principle of universal obligation, he says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have (Heb. xiii. 5); for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." It is a lovely sight to behold a Christian contented and satisfied with the appointments of Providence and the designation of the divine will; but it is an unnatural sight to observe a Christian grasping at gain in many an indirect way, and never satisfied with the appointments of Providence. Were a river to lose its natural bed, and to stray into towns, meadows, and fields, it would not be more unsightly, nor more unnatural, nor more destructive of its end and design, than for a Christian to leave the wise track of Providence with views of worldly advantage. It were well if we attended to the apostle's caution: "Those that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9. It is worth your observation that a river, while keeping within its proper bounds, passes unenvied through the country. So, in the exercise of your Christian moderation, you secure to yourselves a peaceable and quiet passage through life. At least it will most commonly so happen; as you give no offence to any, by pressing unreasonably upon their interests, so they will leave you in the undisturbed possession of your own. This is the reward of Christian con-

* See the Rev. J. Harris's eloquent sermon on "The Witnessing Church."

tentment; it procures respect, and it shows more than any words can do that you are seekers of a better country, that is, a heavenly (Heb. xi. 16), and a resting place (Heb. iv. 9) better suited to your renewed nature.

10. The last analogy we can now notice is, that as a river ultimately falls into the sea, is engulfed in the mighty ocean: so all the streams of grace have their blessed issue in the vast ocean of eternal glory.

“Tis brooks make rivers; rivers turn to seas.”

Then the immensity of heaven's glory shall be realized; grace shall be consummated in eternal glory.

Let it be your endeavour to mix description even in your explicatory discourses, whenever opportunity presents itself. Wherever you can accomplish this purpose you will do much towards relieving that heaviness which hangs upon the explicatory system; and, while you discharge the very necessary duty of instructing the people, you will do this in a manner that is agreeable as well as useful.

A description may sometimes be historical,—that is, the manner of history formed in the imagination. This may be done by personifying the subject you wish to describe. Here you may ascribe to it a birth, a course of life, and a death. Suppose you take the subject “Sin.” To personify sin is perfectly scriptural, as in James i. 15; Rom. v. 21. Sin, says Milton,

“Brought death into the world, with all our woe.”

Here, to suit the occasion, alter Dr. Witherspoon's argument, and make it a kind of original discourse. The doctor's sermon is exegetical, and very suitably executed; what he has said is proper enough, though it suits not the present purpose.

Dr. Witherspoon's text is Heb. iii. 13: “The deceitfulness of sin.” In varying his plan you may speak,

I. Of the origin of sin.

1. In heaven. Satan, “the father of lies,” owns the sad progeny of sinners.

“He of the hosts of heaven sat chief (God only except).”

He first demonstrated sin, and stirred rebellion to its awful height, amid the ranks of angels once pure and holy. The insinuating, mysterious principle was permitted to infuse itself, and to give a character of black deformity only suited to the regions of eternal gloom. Those who were once in the beauties of holiness, pure as the morning stars, took a new and awful character; here the sad effects produced by sin were seen in their expulsion from the regions of light and day.

2. In Paradise was “sin again conceived, and being conceived, brought forth death.” The mystery of iniquity overspread the earth's surface, and “God looked upon the earth, and beheld it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Here then we must remark,

II. The progress of sin, not indeed in its broad character and general acts, for in that case our discourse would never be ended, but the progress that sin makes in the heart of every individual that is under its power, and in the life as the natural effect.

III. The end of sin—death. Ah! who can tell what this death is? Sinful appetites have a natural tendency to destroy our bodies; but especially the sentence of Jehovah, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die.” All that we know is that, as to this world, we cease to be, to move, to act. The body, lost to all its life and health, begins to perish, to become loathsome; it is concealed from the sight of the living. Of this we know a little; but what is the death of the immortal part of man? How is it at all a death, since it does not die, but removes into another and (if not cleansed and pardoned) an awful state? That unknown awfulness is to us death's terror. Conscious of deserving the divine displeasure, the sinner reluctantly meets his Judge, having a dreadful presentiment of his anger, though its power cannot be told. But what is this death? It is the death of hope; it is all happiness engulfed and sunk for ever; it is nothing surviving but a consciousness of loss, a sense of pain deserved, and a melancholy association with partners in iniquity. Death! it is the divine sentence ever in execution, but never consummated to produce relief. A few struggles for the body—eternal struggles for the spirit. Oh, who knows the power of

the divine anger? God alone can tell its measure to the impenitent, unpardoned sinner. But the sentence speaks, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But is there no hope? Yes, verily, "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Wipe away thy tears, then, poor sinner. "Sin hath reigned unto death, that so grace might reign unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The above specimen is not given to be merely imitated, but to be exceeded. When I was a boy I was placed under a writing master who could not write well himself, but who suggested such ideas to the scholars that many of them turned out excellent penmen: I myself was an unhappy exception. So, if I can but suggest a few ideas upon the subject of description, the end will be answered; unless, like me, you should be dull scholars, which I hope will not be the case. There is nothing more delightful than to make an imperfect thing perfect; and, that the attainment may be better secured, go to a finishing master—listen to some preacher that possesses the happy talent, or read some excellent published sermons of the descriptive kind, as Blair's beautiful description of candour. Farquhar's description of charity is also very beautiful. He says,

Charity may be defined as that disposition which inclines us to think and speak well of our fellow-creatures and to deal kindly with them. Mere benevolence or good will regards the beneficence of our actions, and our dispositions to do good. Charity includes these, but respects more immediately the sentiments and affections which we feel towards others. Under the definition now given are comprehended various virtues, to which, in the ordinary intercourse of life, we give different names. Thus it comprehends candour in our judgments, fairness in our actions, humanity and kindness in our whole behaviour. It also implies the absence of several of the blackest vices of human nature—malice, envy, falsehood, deceit, cruelty, oppression, slander. Charity, in this respect, may be compared to a liberal fountain, giving rise to a large river, which in its course divides itself into several branches, and disperses health and plenty over the countries through which it runs. And as this disposition of mind, which we are now considering, may properly be denominated the parent of many distinct virtues, so it may be remarked that a small variation in the objects towards which it is exercised occasions its being called by different appellations. Thus, our love to our country is patriotism, our love to our friends friendship, our love to our kindred, or families, affection. Neither is it surprising that from the same simple, original quality should proceed such various and distinct effects. We may observe in the natural world that from the same seed arise many stalks, each containing many ears of the same kind that was sown. From a small seed arises a tree, with a trunk, branches, and leaves, between which and the seed deposited in the ground the most sharp-sighted can trace no resemblance, and which produces in its turn many seeds of the same kind.

There is likewise an analogy between these things and the principles of our minds, or perhaps the qualities of the latter admit of still greater and more surprising variations. The simple original qualities of our minds are probably not very numerous; but they are as it were seeds sown by the hand of the Creator, which gradually expand themselves, grow up, and assume very various and distinct appearances. The simple quality itself requires some abstraction and attention to observe it, like a small seed, scarcely visible to the naked eye; but its effects are observable to every person.

As charity, therefore, comprehends so many virtues, and has such extensive influence on the conduct of life, both in impelling to that which is right and in restraining from that which is wrong, it will be more useful to consider it with respect to its effects and consequences than to regard it merely in an abstract light," &c.

* The most elaborate work that I possess on the Sin of the Heart is Jamieson's, in two vols, thick 8vo. The work is indeed a most elaborate investigation or description of heart-sin; but it appears to be grounded on Dr. Owen's Treatise on the Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalence of Indwelling Sin in Believers, which last can be had at a moderate price. The subject is highly interesting to a preacher, giving him a vast insight into human nature, views that are scriptural and necessarily lead to the means of restoring grace by the gospel, a subject fully treated of by Dr. Owen in his Mortification of Sin in Believers. This is another cheap book.

The character of the preceding valuable extract I call delineatory, connected with definition and nice discrimination. A frequent use will be found for such description; it is what Blair and some others resort to very frequently, as in his character of idleness (vol. iii. ser. ix.), from which I shall make no extract, because I think this vice cannot belong to young preachers. Between study, preaching, and a proper attention to lawful worldly business, there can be no time for this rust to contract.

I know not whether I may mention descriptive poetry to you, for preaching is one thing and poetry another; yet they have some relation to each other. Preaching, however descriptive, must have no very lofty flights, no high-sounding words. The language must be level to the commonest capacities; yet the thoughts of the preacher may be full of poetic life, even in the simplest forms of expression. Of this you have innumerable instances in holy writ: "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." This is poetry in plain words, and it teaches us a great and important lesson: O that we may learn it! The words are thus paraphrased by Bishop Horne: "Man, fallen, mortal man, 'his days are as grass:' like that he cometh out of the earth, and continueth but a short time upon it. 'As a flower of the field,' fair, but transient, so he unfoldeth his beauty in youth, and 'flourisheth' awhile in the vigour of manhood; but, lo! in a moment the breath of heaven's displeasure, as a blighting 'wind, passeth over him, and he is gone;' he boweth his drooping head, and mingleth again with his native dust; his friends and his companions look for him at the accustomed spot which he once adorned, but in vain; the earth has opened her mouth to receive him, and 'his place shall know him no more.'"

Now, so far as you proceed in this sober manner, your descriptions will do you honour.

The following passage is of a more lofty character—poetical, but still easy of comprehension: "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Thus paraphrased by the same author:—"When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent rays. But when we are to conceive an idea of him as going forth in 'justice and judgment,' to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by 'clouds and darkness,' whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and impenitent."

Here, in the text and paraphrase, the thoughts are poetical, awful, and grand, yet easy of comprehension. The figures are all such as we are acquainted with; and by the terrors of a storm we are led to consider the Lord's majesty when he "awakes to judgment."

I shall add a kind of delineatory perspective description, altered (chiefly in transposition of parts) from Mr. Simeon, which is done, not with the view of amending Mr. Simeon, but to suit my present purpose, which I hope he will excuse. The text is Prov. iv. 18: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

I. The believer's* natural state of darkness and misery. By nature he is, like

* It is here taken for granted that the character "just" in the text is the same in import as that of believer, for a sinner is justified by believing the gospel.

others, in "the region and shadow of death," Matt. iv. 16; Eph. ii. 1—5. He is so far incapable of self-improvement that, if not prevented by sovereign grace, he would sink into eternal darkness. Already he is a captive of the devil, a slave to his lusts, passions, and appetites; his pursuits are ruinous; and success in his own course is his greatest misery. The light that is in him is darkness. His wisdom is folly. He labours, strives, and wears himself for very vanity. But, hark! a sovereign voice calls to him: "O sinner! thou hast sold thyself for nought, and thou shalt be redeemed without money," Isa. liii. 3. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help;"—it is I alone that can "break the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron," that can "say to the prisoners, Go forth, and to those that are in darkness, Show yourselves." Hence,

II. The brilliant course he pursues after being turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God: his way is "as the shining light," or as the sun.

1. The sun in its appearance. The sun is as glorious an object as any in the whole creation. At its approach it tinges the distant clouds with light, and throws upon them unspeakable and varied beauties. On its first appearance it gilds the mountain's top and the tops of waving trees. After a short conflict it dispels all the shades of night, it illuminates the whole horizon. How delightful is this to every beholder! Thus the path of the righteous is exceedingly beautiful. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Their path at the very outset is beautiful to behold. The light of grace begins to adorn their actions. Their simplicity of mind and teachableness of spirit endear them to all their brethren; their lowliness and humility attract universal notice, while the fervour of their love excites admiration and esteem. The very shades in their character serve as a contrast to the excellency of the change that has passed upon them. As they proceed their graces are more matured, and even thus early they "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour." (See also Phil. iv. 8; 2 Pet. i. 5—7.) Such are said to be "beautified with salvation," and "the Spirit of glory rests upon them." They have the sweetest sympathies of the godly with them; angels behold and rejoice; the church is glad; even the wicked "admire," though they "hate, the change." Satan wars, but his efforts are unavailing; he cannot prevent. But has this enemy no hope of regaining the subjects he has lost? Will no impediments arrest their course? Will they not faint by the way? Will they not be entangled and ensnared by the temptations of the world? Will not the mind revert and change, like that of Israel of old? Oh, no; for that were contradictory of the text, and a hundred other scriptures. On the contrary,

2. They shall continue to be beneficial in their influence. They have a work to do and God will secure them in a course of well-doing, or the divine purpose would fail. In this well-doing they shall even "wax stronger and stronger." The sun in our heavens does not rise to mock expectation, but to shine with productive splendour; the light which the luminary spreads over the earth enables the several orders of men to resume their respective callings. "In the darkness they could not go without stumbling," but now they follow their occupations without fear or difficulty. The prowling children of iniquity hide themselves till the return of night. What amazing varieties of employment now recommence, suited to the various talents of mankind! What purposes are pursued by the great and the elevated among mankind! By one day's sun a kingdom may be obtained, as in Joshua's day. If a sabbath day, what conquests may be achieved over Satan's kingdom! Nay, "who knows what a day may bring forth?" Again, does not the natural sun rise to fructify the earth, to make it feel his genial influence? Yes, "first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear." No sun, no ripeness; but every part of the earth feels the sun's invigorating beams, either for utility or beauty, for the growth of the finest of the wheat or to beautify the flowers of the field, to cause the little hills to rejoice on every side; and without this the husbandman would sow in vain, in vain the showers would descend upon hill and vale; without it no hopes could be entertained for the food or the pleasures of human life. And does not the sun say to the inhabitants of the universe, "Work while it is day," for night will soon return? Nor is the Christian unprofitable in his ascension; his light shines before men for beneficial purposes. The light of nature is, like that of the moon and stars, highly beneficial to mankind; but, when "the light of the glorious gospel" shines into the believer's heart, it breaks forth in radiance over his life and actions, which no human power can extinguish, but which will continue to flame, even in persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. And while the sons of wickedness are a snare and a stumbling-block to each other, to the ignorant, and to the unwary, the believer throws a light around him. "He shines in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," by which entangled souls may see their situation and way of escape. Such "hold forth the word of life" in the

family, the village, the public concourse of the city, and often "in the sick chamber, where disease preys on its victim, where timorous dying mortals shrink at the approach of the grim messenger, to soothe the anguish of the troubled mind. The sympathizing, compassionate Christian proves the welcome messenger that brings the good news of salvation. But, eminently, some favoured gifted Christian holds forth a light in the pulpit of the congregation. The doctrines of the righteous are a light of inestimable value, "even the power of God to salvation" to very many at the same moment. And "not in word only, but in deed and in truth," he bears "the peaceable fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God." His personal fruitfulness is comely, his benevolence unfeigned, his friendship sincere, his conduct just, his zeal steady, his candour exemplary. Morals cannot be a dead letter or a mere name while he lives to exemplify them. He excites holy impressions in others, or cherishes such as are weak. He aids the beginnings of grace, and contributes to the general good.

3. Believers, like the sun, are constant in their progress. The sun invariably pursues his wonted course. From the instant that he rises he hastens towards the meridian. He receives his power of ascension from God. His movements are such that we are assured of the very moment of his perfect elevation. The believer's progress is directed by the same power: the self-confident mortal may "faint and be weary," and some may utterly fail; "but those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," till they are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The sun's splendour may indeed be intercepted by the clouds that intervene, and some of these are very dense and black; yet his real existence is not doubted; his light penetrates the thick darkness, so that the character of day is yet preserved, and, though unseen, yet his course suffers no interruptions. Sad, indeed, are the clouds that at times overspread the believer, as it were "thick clouds of the sky." To himself he seems to stop in his course, and his progress is often doubtful to others. Here is one of the mysteries of grace. Sometimes there is an apparent declension, yet the divine purpose is the same towards the believer; there may be a secret preparation in all this for bursting forth again in greater splendour than ever; his revival, if he be indeed a child of God, is secured; Job xvii. 9; Jer. xxxi. 33—37; Phil. i. 6; Ps. lxxxiv. 7; 1 Pet. i. 5; 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10; Dan. xii. 3. And, although for a time the brightness of his light may be obscured, yet it is never wholly extinguished; there is still a light penetrating the clouds which surround him, and it is evident that grace is not suspended. At length the Christian's light is no longer doubtful; all his enemies are disappointed: hear him say, "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light about me." He renews his course; he presses "towards the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and he is again one of the "lights of the world," by his knowledge, his doctrine, and his example.

But a greater triumph of light awaits our world than any yet experienced, when the church collectively shall rise into brightness by the general spreading of the gospel, when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold." Here the whole church will blaze as one light into a more perfect day. Blessed shall be those eyes that see this gospel brightness, when it shall be said, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee," when Gentile nations shall come to the church's light, and heathen "kings to the brightness of her rising." But consider,

III. The glorious consummation of the text, beyond what can be seen in this world. The believer's individual glory, and the glory of the whole church, cannot be perfect here. The full blaze of eternal day can alone bear the testimony. The natural sun shall cease to be a just image of the saints. Creation will not furnish a likeness sufficiently glorious. Then will the saints arise in the likeness of Jesus, in some resemblance to him who is now the great head of all things, and the "light of the world." They shall then, in the kingdom of God, be clothed with his righteousness; then shall they be "the just" in the strictest and purest sense of the term; their imperfections shall disappear for ever. Many of the saints have shone brightly on earth; but their best light, though it were equal to that of the apostle of the Gentiles, shall be nothing in comparison with that which shall hereafter be manifested. "Then shall they know even as they are known." Nay, their light of intelligence shall be ever growing, as millions of years shall roll on their way; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," what great things are laid up for "those who love God, and are the called according to his purpose." But, as we are even now the "children of the light," let us study to act a part becoming our high calling; let us impart to a dark world that which we have received; and, being faithful unto death, we shall receive a crown of glory, which shall never fade away.

Oh, how great is the privilege to be permitted to shed any degree of light, effulgence, and lustre upon our dark world ! that God has favoured us with faculties, powers, and a willingness of mind to exert ourselves in the great work of salvation !

Dr. Chalmers on 1 John ii. 15. Subject, The love of God the only instrument to destroy the love of the world, by an exhibition of the superiority of heaven to earth.

Conceive a man to be standing on the margin of this green world, and that, when he looked towards it, he saw abundance swelling every field, and all the blessings which earth can afford scattered about in profusion through every family, and the light of the sun sweetly resting upon all the pleasant habitations, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society. Conceive this to be the general character of the scene upon one side of his contemplation, and that on the other, beyond the verge of the goodly planet on which he was situated, he could descry nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it ? Would he leave its peopled dwelling-places and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of nonentity ? If space afford him but a wilderness, would he for it abandon the home-bred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exercised such a power of urgency to detain him ? Would he not cleave to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society ? and, shrinking from the desolation that was beyond it, would he not be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it ?

But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blessed had floated by, and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories and its sounds of sweet melody, and he saw clearly that there a purer beauty rested upon every field and a more heartfelt glow spread itself among all the families, and he could discern there peace, and piety, and benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society with one rejoicing sympathy with each other and with the beneficent Father of them all—could he further see that pain and mortality were unknown, and, above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not that what was before the wilderness would become the land of invitation, and that now the world would be the wilderness ? What unpeopled space could not do can be done by space teeming with beautiful scenes and beautiful society. And, let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visibly around us, still if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith or through the channel of his senses, then, without violence done to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die unto the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.

The following example I have selected from Dr. Payson's volume of Sermons, from which I have already inserted a quotation filled with beautiful description, though for another purpose. See p. 132. The text is Rev. i. 7. Subject, The second coming of Christ.

What are the pompous triumphs, the gaudy pageants, the long processions, on which men gaze with eager delight, compared with the descent of the Creator, the Judge, from heaven, surrounded by all the seraphic hosts, and bearing with him the final sentence, the eternal, unchangeable destiny of every child of Adam ? Pause then, and contemplate with the eye of faith, or, if you have no faith, with the eye of imagination, this tremendous scene. Look at that point, far away in the ethereal region, where the gradually lessening form of our Saviour disappeared from the gaze of his disciples when he ascended to heaven. In that point see an uncommon, but faint and undefined brightness, just beginning to appear. It has caught the roving eye of yon careless gazer, and excited his curiosity. He points it out to a second and a third. A little circle soon collects, and various are the conjectures which they form respecting it. Similar circles are formed, and similar conjectures made, in a thousand different parts of the world ; but conjecture is soon to give place to certainty—awful, appalling, overwhelming certainty. While they gaze the appearance which excited their curiosity rapidly approaches, and still more rapidly brightens. Some begin to suspect what it may prove, but no one dares to give utterance to his suspicions. Meanwhile the light of the sun begins to fade before a brightness superior to his own. Thousands see their shadows cast in a new direction, and thousands of hitherto care-

less eyes look up at once to discover the cause. Full clearly they see it, and now new hopes and fears begin to agitate their breasts. The afflicted and persecuted servants of Christ begin to hope that the predicted, long-expected day of their deliverance has arrived. The wicked, the careless, the unbelieving, begin to fear that the Bible is about to prove no idle tale; and now fiery shapes, moving like streams of lightening, begin to appear indistinctly amidst the bright dazzling cloud which comes rushing down as on the wings of a whirlwind. At length it reaches its destined place. It pauses; then, suddenly unfolding, discloses at once a great white throne, where sits, starry resplendent, in all the glory of the Godhead, the man Jesus Christ. Every eye sees him. Every heart knows him. Too well do the wicked unprepared inhabitants of earth now know what to expect; and one universal shriek of anguish and despair rises to heaven, and is echoed back to earth. But louder, far louder than the universal cry, now sounds the last trumpet, and far above all is heard the voice of the Omnipotent, summoning the dead to rise and come to judgment. New terrors assail the living. On every side, nay, under their very feet, the earth heaves as in convulsions; graves open, and the dead come forth; while, at the same moment, a change, equivalent to that occasioned by death, is effected by almighty power on the bodies of the living; their mortal bodies put on immortality, and are thus prepared to sustain a weight of glory or of wretchedness which flesh and blood could not endure. Meanwhile, legions of angels are seen darting from pole to pole, gathering together the faithful servants of Christ from the four winds of heaven, and bearing them aloft to meet the Lord in the air, where he causes them to be placed at his own right hand, preparatory to the sentence which is to award to them everlasting life. But, oh appalling truth! "where shall the ungodly and wicked appear?" appear they will, and in the same moment, and in the same view of the Judge; but it will be to hear the sentence of everlasting banishment "from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." Let imagination paint a doom like this, for it defies words to utter.

Any remarks on the foregoing beautiful extracts would be superfluous. Such bright examples show how effectually this branch of our subject may be brought to bear upon the all-important work of publishing the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and persuading sinners "to flee from the wrath to come."

I cannot dismiss this portion of my present Lecture without referring you to the following sublime descriptions, which, among many others, are interspersed throughout the sacred writings:—

The song of Moses, *Exod. xv.*

Israel's exultation over the humiliation and final ruin of the proud king of Babylon, *Isa. xiv.*

The circumstances accompanying and following the general resurrection and the final judgment, *Rev. xx., &c.*

Representation by means of words is a kind of picture held up to the mind, and is intended for the same purpose, viz. to create some excitement, either for entertainment or instruction. It has already been observed that the more exquisitely these representations are drawn the more delight or profit they afford; and it would be in vain to look for a similar effect from mere perceptive or didactic forms of language addressed to such fallen creatures as we are, so obtuse to impression of a spiritual character. Conceiving it to be your desire to avail yourselves of every means which may aid you in your public exercises, I deem no apology necessary for extending my remarks on this subject. If I can avoid throwing perplexity around it instead of light, I shall think myself so far happy, while it is certainly my aim to contribute such assistance as may serve your purpose until better aid presents itself.

That scripture is the purest source of instruction in this art cannot be doubted; and that your ideas of scripture excellence may be greatly enlarged by a careful investigation of its descriptive beauties is equally plain, to which I may add that the closer you keep to this rule the better you will succeed: the truth of this will be attested by a slight observation and a

very short experience. Human literature is not without its advantages ; but, when drawn from its purest sources and cultivated in its highest perfection, it will be found, if brought into competition with divine revelation, only as the puerilities of childhood compared with the maturity of wisdom. Weigh their respective claims in the balance, and observe on which side is the preponderance. Observe the elements of each, the fitness of the one and the total unfitness of the other. You will perceive that one operates in a gracious manner, yet quite suited to the natural feelings of the heart ; while the other is trivial, without any natural connexion with our internal movements, totally incapable of a divine or gracious effect, and gratifying only to a vitiated taste.

The elements of description are characters, objects, &c., the circumstances pertaining to them existing at some certain moment, and clothed in appropriate language. In proportion as these are fit or unfit for the purpose of improving the mind, our decision terminates. We judge by the effects that follow, just as a "tree is known by its fruit." For the benefit of mankind at large, the sovereign ruler and disposer of all things has created and established the elements of instruction on the site of the Jewish nation and its various dependencies, on himself, on the heavens above, and the earth beneath. All these are agencies under his command. So exactly are the means and the end adapted to each other, that we are constrained to say, "This is the finger of God."

You will observe that Judea is the site of descriptive teaching ; this was God's school, and he was himself the teacher. It pleased God to make the history of the Jewish nation suited to figurative instruction. In this he displayed, as in a mirror, his own divine perfections, particularly his power, wisdom, and goodness, and this so effectually that the abstract doctrine of his perfections was not at all necessary to be taught by system ; and, in fact, by this method of instruction they never could have been so well known. Now, as you read the scriptures consecutively, you will not fail to remark the descriptive instruction or figurative language that is founded upon the historical events of the Jewish nation, in their migrations from Egypt to their settlement in the land of Canaan. You will see how far the language of instruction is founded upon those important events, when each of the sacred writers would display the divine perfections that so eminently appear in them ;* you will remark that God's dealings with his ancient people are exhibited as grounds of encouragement and hope ; you will notice what frequent reference is made to this history in the book of Psalms, particularly in the 68th, 78th, 105th, 106th, and 107th, and very frequently throughout the prophetic books ; and that, without this supply of descriptive language, the purposes of divine wisdom in them could not have been so well answered. In their history you will also see a picture of the perverseness, the obstinacy, and the unbelief of the natural heart, so ill requit-

* "When you travel in Judea, you behold extraordinary appearances every where proclaiming a country teeming with prodigies. The scorching sun, the towering eagle, the barren fig-tree, all the poetry and all the pictures of scripture, are found here. Every name revives the recollection of something significant ; every grotto indicates something symbolical ; every hill suggests the voice of a prophet. In these regions the Almighty himself has spoken. Rivers that are now dried up, rocks that are rent in sunder, sepulchres half open, attest a miracle ; the desert still appears mute through terror ; and you would imagine that it never presumed to interrupt the awfulness of silence since it heard the voice of the Eternal."—*Jones's Bib. Encyc., sub voc. "Dead Sea."*

ing the divine benevolence ; you will see in the exercise of divine mercy ; long-suffering, and forbearance towards such a people, as well as in the occasional chastisements of an offended but faithful Jehovah, a striking and forcible representation of the unfathomable riches of divine mercy. It must be admitted that no didactic forms of language could be so easy of common apprehension. Here the images held up to the mind are so familiar, and yet so convincing, that we cannot read without admiration ; while both the history itself, and the facts connected with it, furnish the surest grounds of dependence on all the covenants and promises made to that people.

The descriptive language of scripture is further enriched by the Aaronical and more spiritual economy, wherein the doctrines of the gospel were preached to that people in pictures ; as the mediatorship of Christ in the person and office of Aaron and partly in that of Moses, the vicarious nature of his death in the various kinds of sacrifices, &c. Independently of these, the wilderness originated very wonderful types or shadows of good things to come ; such as the miraculous supply of manna, the waters of Horeb, the brazen serpent, the appointment of cities of refuge, &c. Observe what a large range of descriptive instruction is contained in the following parts of scripture grounded on these points, and how necessarily these become the vehicle of divine language, as often as it is found necessary to point out the manner or means by which a holy God can hold intercourse with his sinful creatures, in what way he is pleased to forgive sin and receive the sinner into favour.

The descriptive elements of instruction were, moreover, abundantly enriched by another fruitful source. It pleased God, in his providence, to constitute the posterity of Abraham a rural people, conversant with nature in its purest forms, also with husbandry, horticulture, and the feeding of flocks and herds, a pleasing account of which you will find in M. Fleury's *History of the Israelites*, translated by Dr. A. Clarke. Their rural scenes were nurseries of instruction. What this people daily saw, heard, and felt, became the language of their morals and of their religion also. From sensible objects they were led to such as are intellectual. Hence the rains and the dews furnished them with ideas of the divine grace, the returning seasons taught them the doctrine of divine providence, the extraordinary products of their country became emblems of virtue, the mountains and hills gave them ideas of the magnificence of Jehovah, particularly the Mount Zion, at once the glory and beauty of their nation ; the thunder and vivid lightning impressed them with the ideas of God's anger ; clouds and darkness taught the mysteries of his will. David's early occupation taught him to look up to Jehovah as his divine Shepherd, as he who led Israel like a flock, and guarded them as with a shepherd's care.

Now, if you carefully examine the language of scripture, you will see how much its descriptive elements are taken from these circumstances, and how inimitably ideas are transferred from them to things intellectual, moral, and spiritual, and we may defy the ingenuity of man to furnish any adequate substitute for these materials. See what uses the prophets, and especially our Lord Jesus Christ, made of these things, of which more will be said under the sixteenth Topic.

I must not omit to mention in this place how admirably the Hebrew idiom received these elements of instruction. Its beautiful copiousness and simplicity are, in this respect, without a parallel ; and, as all this descriptive instruction was ultimately to become common property to all nations, the language

was constructed in such manner; and the things spoken of were of such kinds, as were most easy of translation. This fact may almost rank with miracles. There is no parallel to be found. The original beauties of the Hebrew language are so completely retained in our own, though literally translated, that a faithful picture of the original is produced; whereas, take a literal translation of Virgil, and you will find it produces little better than nonsense, of which a thousand instances might be quoted out of a volume now before me.

But, that God might leave nothing imperfect, he not only furnished the elements of descriptive language, but raised up, in different periods, holy prophets, who, under a divine impulse, applied and gave direction to the use of this holy language, of which you have, in the Psalms and the prophets, instances without end; and these applicatory instances are, to this day, the standard of descriptive instruction, affording you, as preachers, the best rules for this kind of discourse. Thus has God given us "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," in matter, manner, and example, equal to all desire. If you wish to be descriptive preachers, here are your patterns of oratory; draw copiously, fulfil your pleasure.

Now collect all these circumstances together, take a full view of them, as the elements of descriptive instruction, and I think you must be filled with wonder and admiration at their variety, their riches, and their adaptation to the end proposed. On the contrary, look at the state of things in any other ancient nation, as supposed to afford similar elements of mental instruction. Take the state of either Greece or Rome. Where is the acknowledged superintending Jehovah? What adaptation is there in the materials of their history upon which to form a view of such a ground-plot of instruction as in the Jewish people? What wonders of God ever appeared among them, conveying such a display of the divine character? What instruction will be found in their heathen mythology, in their filthy and abominable rites? We see that, even from their scenes of civil life, the poets could produce nothing that could interest the world without the introduction of a tribe of imaginary beings, as fauns and satyrs, fairies and demigods, transformed to human locality and converse. Where are their holy rites, or their holy prophets, to direct them? They may indeed aim at a moral, but they find a perfect vanity. We are ready to allow that those nations produced some great men, but what real wisdom they possessed was manifestly derived from the Israelitish nation.* Suppose you were to make the attempt to adorn your instruction with their materials, how do you think you would succeed? where would you hide your disgrace? Their whole stock would not furnish one spiritual idea. In this wilderness you would find nothing wherewith to feed your people; and return you must to Salem's happy land and the language of Canaan. The language thence derived will supply you with descriptive eloquence that all nature owns, that God and all good men approve, into whatever nation under heaven you enter.

And here it may be observed that though the apostles after their Lord's ascension could not, from the altered state of things, keep so completely to the old standard of teaching as in earlier times; though they had to preach

[* This used to be a favorite notion. "Gale's Court of the Gentiles" is an elaborate attempt to prove it, but it breaks down through its excess. Modern infidelity equally fails to show that Christianity is derived from the heathen mythologies and philosophies.]

upon facts and doctrines, and prove them by inductions of particulars which must differ materially from the ancient simplicity ; yet the language of the Epistles is very much borrowed from the Old Testament, and as much as possible that style is preserved—enough, at least, to convince us of the veneration in which the ancient language was held by them, and to show us that the apostles considered the representative or descriptive manner as the most edifying to the people, and that without it they could not be understood, as a reference to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews would fully manifest.

If, therefore, we were to decide against the descriptive system, or corrupt it through a vitiated taste and perverted judgment, or decline it as unattainable, I think we should be answerable for the consequences. More culpable still should we be were we to adopt that tinsel language which is now so much indulged in. If our descriptions were no longer taken from scripture, from nature, and common life, but from modern arts and sciences, from the wisdom of the world and the maxims of the schools, and clothed with words above the comprehension of the great mass of mankind—here the mischief and the consequent responsibility would be great indeed. No authority can justify such a practice ; no example of God-fearing men can be found in its favour.

If then I am asked, How is pure description now to be acquired ? I answer, Certainly at the fountain head—the holy scriptures. Study the scriptures with this view, and do it diligently. The very language of scripture merely adopted, will indeed answer the purpose, but then it must be properly and skilfully introduced, and humble, well-meant imitations are not to be despised. Nor are you to think that your discourses upon this scripture plan will be destitute of elegance. No ; be true to scripture, to nature, and to experience, and you will not fail, in some degree, of true elegance. Elegance does not consist in finery of dress, but in that which is becoming and appropriate ; and, as there is a native simplicity, so is there also a native dignity. This, perhaps, is a preacher's greatest recommendation.

Nobody would suppose that if John Bunyan had taken lessons from the classical vicar of Bedford, or even the bishop of his diocese, that his *Pilgrim's Progress* would have been thereby improved. His descriptions, without lessons of this sort, are inimitably simple, scriptural, true to nature, and just. His own unfettered conceptions drew the plan, formed the characters, determined the dialogues, and effected the moral of the whole.

The following directions may not however be unacceptable :—

1. Let the thing you wish to describe, the thought itself, be worthy of your words ; for to give a laboured description of a thing that is little or mean would disgrace you.*
2. Endeavour to place this object of thought before the eye of your mind ; take sufficient time for this purpose ; impatience here is ruin. Nebuchadnezzar was wise in one thing : as his notion of his image was but confused and imperfect, he would not attempt the description of it at all. The goodness of God gave Daniel a perfect perception of this image ; it was placed before the eye of his mind in perfect union with truth. See Dan. ii. 31—35. In Daniel's description of this image you observe that the first thing mentioned is its greatness ; and this precedency is perfectly natural, for magnitude, or

* It has been judged a fault in our excellent Hervey that every thing he describes in his *Meditations*, &c., receives from him the same laboured description. There is no relief, no discrimination between an important and an unimportant object, in his descriptions. [This criticism on Hervey reminds us of Goldsmith's remark to Johnson, "If you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales."]

indeed exceeding minuteness, is the first impression. So the spies, when they returned to Moses and related what they saw, began by stating the gigantic size of the men, the amazing height of the city walls reaching to heaven. Thus Shakespeare, when describing the world in a brief manner, commences with "the cloud-capped towers." So when David would speak of the divine goodness, he exclaims, "Oh, how *great* is thy goodness!" But to return to the royal dream of Nebuchadnezzar: there were general qualities belonging to this image besides that of size; these very naturally came next in description. Its brightness was excellent, yet this brightness was not like the brightness of the diamond, for it contributed to its terribleness: "The form thereof was terrible." Here you see the description commences and continues by words which express the feelings of the mind. I would not give a straw for a description that had no relation to my feelings. Something may be allowed to accuracy, purely; but some touch of feeling must be communicated either by the pencil or the pen, or by the lips. The form of this image was altogether terrible, though it uttered no terrible things—its looks were enough. Next you read that his head was of gold, and so on to the end. Here you observe is an enumeration of particulars that renders the description complete, and which Daniel was able to give, because he had a complete impression upon his mind respecting this image. While, however, it is necessary to enumerate particulars, care must be taken not to be too precise; nothing would have been said about the toes of this huge image had they not had peculiar reference to the Roman power. In short, as it is a great point in a description to know where to begin, so it is not less important to know when you ought to have done.

3. Let the language employed be suitable to the occasion, or the thing, or thought, or subject, you are about to describe. If the subject be of the pathetic kind, the language must be serious and tender, &c. Take, for your example, the story of Abraham offering up his son Isaac, Gen. xxii. Nothing could be more exquisitely touching than the dialogue of the father and the son.* If the subject be awful, the sublime descriptions of the sacred writers will abundantly direct you; such as, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." "O God! when thou wentest before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest." Again, the animated description, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord." "For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands," &c.

In general the language of description is copious and diffusive, often duplicating the same idea in varied forms of expression; as, "Remember me, O Lord! with the favour that thou bearest to thy people: O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." This is a description of what the Psalmist desired; here are five modes of expressing the

* The tract of the Dairyman's Daughter, by Legh Richmond, which is of easy purchase, is a fine specimen of the tender kind of description.

same thing.* Mere poverty of thought sometimes puts people upon repetition; but in description the retaining of a thought, as in the above example, is very beautiful. The books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, abound with reduplications, sometimes with a little variation of sense, but mostly without. Indeed I think fulness of language is essential to description, though sometimes beauty and brevity go hand in hand together, as 1 Kings xix. 11; Gen. i. 3; Ps. xxxiii. 9.

Description must, however, possess beauty as well as amplitude. You see that scriptural descriptions abound with representative language, or such as is figurative; with metaphorical words, as "God is a sun and shield;" with beautiful similes, as, The godly man "shall be like the trees planted by the rivers of water," &c.; or with strong contrasts, "But the wicked are not so, they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." The book of Proverbs abounds with descriptive contrast: "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." These figurative expressions give great energy and beauty to the sense, as Blair has observed: "When I say that a good man enjoys comfort in the midst of adversity, I just express my thought in the simplest manner possible; but when I say, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness,' the same sentiment is expressed in a figurative style; light is put in the place of comfort, and darkness is used to signify adversity." Thus figures of speech are the natural vehicles of description. They must, however, be judiciously chosen, such as exist in real life and pure nature, which the common people can understand and relish; for if our figures of speech be formed from the arts and sciences, or philosophy, or from circumstances in heathen history, they are to be reprobated. Yet beautiful expressions are not to be made too cheap, nor placed too thickly; and those which are retained must be neatly conducted, and every thing expressed in an easy and flowing manner, without the appearance of labour and study.

It is a poor, pitiful trick to announce to the people that you are about to describe such or such a thing; it looks like saying, "Now I am about to exhibit to you one of the grandest things imaginable." Nor should any kind of humble apology be made either before or after such attempts; every one would then say, "The man is preaching himself, and not Christ." Do your best in sincerity, and your intention will be well received and duly appreciated.

4. As I have ventured thus far in recommending figurative language, I must point out the faults to which you will be liable in the use of it. How often do we hear of a "beautiful tune," and a "beautiful flavour;" whereas there can be no beauty in a tune, nor in the taste of an apple; the tune may be melodious, the flavour may be delicious, but not beautiful. Good taste is often similarly offended by the phrase "monotonous scenery," or "monotonous employment;" whereas the high-sounding term thus unnaturally associated is applicable only to *sounds*. Such gross inconsistencies must be carefully avoided.

* "A diffuse writer," pretty much the same with a descriptive writer, "unfolds his thought fully. He places it in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understanding it completely. He is not very careful to express it at first in its full strength, because he is to repeat the impression; and what he wants in strength he proposes to supply by copiousness. Writers of this character generally love magnificence and amplification. Their periods naturally run out into some length, and having room for ornament of every kind, they admit it freely."—*Blair*, Lect. xviii.

Again, when you design to give a thought in a figurative or metaphorical manner, this style must be wholly continued to the end. Had the Psalmist, for instance, said, "To the upright there ariseth light in affliction," there would have been a manifest inconsistency; but as light is set against darkness it is quite correct. Blair is perfectly right when he says: "It must be carefully attended to, in the conduct of metaphors, never to fumble metaphorical and plain language together, never to construct a period so that a part of it must be understood metaphorically, part literally, which always introduces a most disagreeable confusion. Pope, in complimenting the king, says,

‘To thee the world its present homage pays,
The harvest early, but mature the praise.’

It is plain that had not the rhyme misled him to the choice of an improper phrase, he would have said, 'The harvest early, but mature the crop,' and so would have continued the figure which he had begun; whereas by dropping it unfinished, and employing the literal word praise, the sentence is altogether spoiled."

"Of a like nature," says the Doctor, "Is the sentence of Mr. Addison: 'There is not a single view of human nature which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride.' Observe the incoherence of the things here joined together—viz., making 'a view extinguish,' and 'extinguish seeds.'"

5. If you would improve in description, avoid reading bad authors, for they have an unhappy tendency to vitiate the taste. It was said of Sir Peter Lely (and which I quote from Bishop Horne's Essays) that he never would look at a bad picture, having found by experience that whenever he did so his pencil took a tint from it. This will apply to bad books and bad company. However, here we may go too far. Our old divinity authors are not to be discarded for their quaintness of expression, or their want of taste.*

I am aware that I am involving myself in a difficulty: you are to read the most correct authors, and yet to read old divinity; how is this to be settled? Allow me, in reply, to recommend the plan of the eloquent Bosquet: a little before you commence the study of a sermon, of which description is to form either the whole or a part, read appropriate chapters of scripture, or a book of the purest taste that is evangelical, till you feel something of true descriptive animation flowing into your thoughts. This will preserve you from error on the one hand, and from cold formality on the other.

LECTURE XII.

TOPIC IV.

OBSERVE THE RELATION OF ONE SUBJECT WITH ANOTHER.

THE main design of Mons. Claude in this Topic is to suggest suitable remarks, in illustration of the immediate subject of discourse, drawn from the consideration of other subjects to which it may more or less bear a relation. In order, however, that you may avail yourselves of this topic

[* Robert Hall's custom was to read the old authors for their exhaustive thought, but before composition to spend some time in the study of superior writers. The remark in the text is only partially applicable to our old authors, some of whom, such as Jeremy Taylor, Dr. South, and others, are invaluable to the student of style.]

skilfully and appropriately, it is necessary, not only that your minds be stored with scripture truth in general, but that you aim to acquire clear ideas of the *mutual dependence* of the various facts and doctrines of the gospel. But I must allow Mons. Claude to illustrate the topic:—

“For example, when in scripture God is called a *Father*, the relation of that term to *children* is evident, and we are obliged not only to remark the paternal inclinations which are in God towards us, and the advantages which we receive from his love, but also the duties to which we are bound as children of such a father. The same may be said of all these expressions of Scripture, *God is our God*, we are *his people*—he is our *portion*, we are *his heritage*—he is our *master*, we are *his servants*—he is our *king*, we are the *subjects of his kingdom*—he is our *prophet or teacher*, we are *his disciples*—with many more of the same kind. When we meet with such, single and separate, they must be discussed in relation to one another, and this relation must be particularly considered. Thus, when the *kingdom* of God, or of Jesus Christ is spoken of, all things relative to this kingdom must be considered—as its laws, arms, throne, crown, subjects, extent of dominion, palace where the king resides, &c. So when our mystical *marriage* with Jesus Christ is spoken of, whether it be where he is called a bridegroom or his church a bride, you should, after you have explained these expressions, turn your attention to relative things,—as the love of Jesus Christ to us, which made him consent to this mystical marriage—the dowry that we bring him, our sins and miseries—the communication which he makes to us both of his name and benefits—the rest that he grants us in his house, changing our abode—the banquet at his divine nuptials—the inviolable fidelity which he requires of us—the right and power he acquires over us—the defence and protection which he engages to afford us; but, when these relative things are discussed, great care must be taken neither to insist on them too much, nor to descend to mean ideas, nor even to treat of them one after another, in form of a parallel; for nothing is more tiresome than treating these apart, and one after another. They must, then, be associated together. A body composed of many images must be formed, and the whole must be always animated with the sensible and the spiritual. I think a preacher ought to content himself with making one single observation, or, at the most, two, in case the relative things are too numerous to be collected into one point of view. In such a case you must endeavour to reduce them to two classes, but in two different orders; and always make the difference perceptible, so that it may not be said you have made two observations of what was naturally but one.”

The doctrine of relationships is not less extensive than that of creature-ship, for no being nor subject can be literally isolated and independent. A preacher can therefore never be at a loss for something to say, and something pertinent and profitable too, if he properly understand this subject.

Among the relations between one subject and another which will most frequently furnish suitable reflections, are those between doctrine and precept, between one doctrine and another, between privilege and obligation, promises and threatenings, reasons for hope and fear, joy and sorrow, between the different graces of the spirit in believers, and between one class of wickedness and another in the ungodly, &c. In referring to correlative subjects, care must however be taken that the relation be real and not fanciful. Keach's *Parallels and Comparisons*, along with much excellent matter, have many fanciful relations which can never be justified, and these are

sometimes run to such an extravagant length as to burlesque Christianity. I hope I shall not fall under this imputation in the relation of things which I am about to consider; that is, in the relation between God's paternal regard to us and our obligations as his children, between types and their anti-types, prophecies and their accomplishment, parables and their doctrines, miracles and their symbolical meaning.

First, of the relation between God's paternal regard for us and our obligations as his children. Claude's rule is, "When, in scripture, God is called a Father, the relation of that term to children is evident, and we are obliged to notice it as implied." I am here without an example that exactly suits my purpose; if I had such an example most certainly it would be preferred; the following outline may serve for illustration. Take for a text Jer. xxxi. 9: "For I am a Father to Israel." The text presents the blessed God in the endearing character of a Father to his people. Consider,

I. The nature of this relationship.

1. It is spiritual. God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of us through him, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." Of this the Israelitish nation was a type. Jer. xxx. 22, and xxxi. 1—9, &c.; Eph. i. 5. This differs materially from our relation to Him as his creatures. Hence believers are represented as a new creation. "We are his workmanship (spiritually), created in Christ Jesus unto good works." By a sovereign act of God his people are adopted into his family; he puts them among the children, and gives them "a name better than that of sons and daughters." This restored order of things is the subject treated of in the chapter out of which our text is taken, as well as that which precedes it. On this principle the apostle could say, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" and our Lord himself taught his disciples to say, "Our Father," &c.

2. It is near and interesting. This is evident,

- 1.) From the love and tenderness expressed towards his adopted children; Zech. ii. 8; Ps. ciii. 13; Isa. liv. 6—10; Jer. xxxi. 3.
- 2.) From the fact that his Spirit dwells in them: Rom. viii. 14—17; Gal. iv. 4—7.
- 3.) From the interest which Christ has in them. See the tenth chapter of John.
- 4.) From the exceedingly great and precious promises which are recorded for their encouragement and support.

3. It is permanent. Hence the declared purpose of God never to break or deny this relationship: Matt. iii. 6; Jer. xxxiii. 20—26.

II. The tokens of this relationship. Adoption is not merely an immanent act of God, but also an operative purpose. We shall perceive this from the following views:—

1. Our heavenly Father bestows upon his children spiritual faculties.

- 1.) He opens their ears and imparts instructions: Job xxxiii. 16; Isa. xxix. 18, and xxx. 21. They listen to his voice: Ps. xxvii. 8; Hab. ii. 1.
- 2.) He opens their eyes: Isa. xxxv. 5; Ps. cxix. 18, and cxlvi. 8; Eph. i. 18. They exercise the blessing obedientially, Ps. cxiii. 2; fiducially, Ps. cxiii. 1.
- 3.) He gives divine affections: Ps. cx. 3; Jer. xxxi. 3. They say, "We will love thee, O Lord! our strength," Ps. xviii. 1; "We love him because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. See also Ps. cxix. 97. These and similar reciprocal acts may be traced throughout the whole of Christian experience.

2. He exercises a paternal government over them, such as is suited to the character of a Father.

- 1.) He throws his protection around them: Zech. ii. 5; Ps. cxxv. 2. They say, "We will trust under the covert of thy wings," Ps. lxi. 4.
- 2.) He assigns them their work: Matt. xxv. 15; Luke xix. 13. They run in the way of his commands, Ps. cxix. 32; use the talents which he commits to them, and "occupy till he come."
- 3.) When needful he corrects them: Heb. xii. 5—11. They submit, or ought to submit, to him, Heb. xii. 9; Mic. vii. 9.
- 4.) He provides for them: Ps. xxxiii. 1, 2. They delight in his goodness: Ps. xxxi. 19.
3. He regards the specialties of their relationship to himself in every thing that is kind, indulgent, and suitable, &c.

III. The inferences which may be deduced from this subject.

1. We see the folly of attempting to separate what God has joined together. Privilege and duty are inseparably connected in the divine purpose and administration.
2. The infinite blessedness of the new covenant state.

3. If God be our Father, we ought to imitate him in all his imitable perfections : Matt. v. 48.

It will be observed that in the foregoing example the Topic, in its strict and legitimate application, performs a very useful service under the second general head, where, in noticing the tokens of God's paternal regard to his children, the corresponding tokens of their regard for him are introduced so as to aid the general impression.

While on this subject I shall offer no apology for introducing a general view of our relations as men and as Christians, which will not be wholly without its use in showing the student how to avail himself of correlative topics, agreeably to Claude's rule, while its intrinsic excellence renders it well worth being treasured up in the mind. It comprises the substance of a chapter in Mason's Self-knowledge :—

Our duty requires us to be well acquainted with the various relations in which we stand to other beings, and the several duties which result from those relations.

I. Our principal concern is to consider the relation we stand in to HIM who gave us our being. We are the creatures of his hand, and the objects of his care. His power upholds the being his goodness gave us ; his bounty accommodates us with the blessings of this life ; and his grace provides for us the happiness of a better. Nor are we merely his creatures, but his rational and intelligent creatures. It is the dignity of our nature that we are capable of knowing and enjoying him that made us. And as rational creatures there are two relations especially that we stand in to him, the frequent consideration of which is absolutely necessary ; for, as our Creator, he is our King and Father, and, as his creatures, we are the subjects of his kingdom and the children of his family.

1. We are the subjects of his kingdom, and are therefore bound,

1.) To yield a faithful obedience to the laws of his kingdom. The advantages by which these come to be recommended to us above all human laws are many. They are calculated for the private interest of every one, as well as that of the public, and are designed to promote our present as well as our future happiness. They are plainly and explicitly published, easily understood, and in fair and legible characters written in every man's heart ; and the wisdom, the reason, and the necessity of them, are readily discerned. They are urged with the most mighty motives that can possibly affect the human heart. And, if any of them are difficult, the most efficacious grace is freely offered to encourage and assist our obedience. These are advantages which no human laws have to enforce the observance of them.

2.) As his subjects we must readily pay him the homage due to his sovereignty. And this is no less than the homage of the heart, humbly acknowledging that we hold every thing of him and have every thing from him. Earthly princes are obliged to be content with verbal acknowledgments, or mere formal homage ; for they can command nothing but what is external. But God, who knows and looks at the hearts of all his creatures, will accept nothing but what comes thence. He demands the adoration of the whole soul, which is most justly due to him who formed us and gave us capacities to know and adore him.

3.) As faithful subjects we must cheerfully pay him the tribute he requires of us. This is not like the tribute exacted by earthly kings, who as much depend upon their subjects for the support of their power as their subjects do upon them for the protection of their property. The tribute God requires of us is one of praise and honour, which he stands in no need of from us, for his power is independent and his glory immutable, and he is infinitely able of himself to support the dignity of his universal government. But it is the most natural duty we owe to him as creatures ; for to praise him is only to show forth his praise, to glorify him is to celebrate his glory, and to honour him is to render him and his ways honourable in the eyes and esteem of others. And, as this is the most natural duty that creatures owe to their Creator, so it is a tribute he requires of every one of them in proportion to their respective talents and abilities to pay it.

4.) As dutiful subjects we must contentedly and quietly submit to the methods and administrations of his government, however dark, involved, or intricate. All governments have their *arcana imperii*, or secrets of state, which common subjects cannot penetrate, and therefore they cannot competently judge of the wisdom or rectitude of certain public measures, because they are ignorant of the springs of them, or the ends

of them, or the expediency of the means, arising from the particular situation of things in the present juncture. And how much more true is this with relation to God's government of the world, whose wisdom is far above our reach, "and whose ways are not as ours!" Whatever then may be the aspect and appearance of things, as dutiful subjects we are bound to acquiesce, to ascribe wisdom and "righteousness to our Maker," in confidence that the King and Judge of all the earth will do right.

5.) As good subjects of God's kingdom we are bound to pay a due regard and reverence to his ministers, especially if they discover an uncorrupted fidelity to his cause, and a pure unaffected zeal for his honour, if they do not seek their own interest more than that of their divine Master. The ministers of earthly princes too often do this; and it would be happy if all the ministers and ambassadors of the heavenly King were entirely clear of the imputation. It is no uncommon thing for the honour of an earthly monarch to be wounded through the sides of his ministers. The defamation and slander that is directly thrown at them is obliquely intended against him, and as such it is taken. So to attempt to make the ministers of the gospel in general the objects of derision, as some do, plainly shows a mind very dissolute and disaffected to God and religion itself, and is to act a part very unbecoming the dutiful subjects of his kingdom.

6.) As good subjects we are to do all we can to promote the interest of his kingdom, by defending the wisdom of his administrations, and endeavouring to reconcile others thereunto, under all the darkness and difficulties that may appear in them, in opposition to the profane censures of the prosperous wicked and the doubts and dismays of the afflicted righteous. This is to act in character, as loyal subjects of the King of heaven. And whoever forgets this part of his character, or acts contrary to it, shows very awful insensibility to the nature of the relation subsisting between his heavenly King and him his unworthy subject and servant.

2. As the creatures of God we are not only the subjects of his kingdom, but the children of his family. And to this relation, and the obligations of it, must we carefully attend. We are his children by creation, in which respect he is truly our Father, Isa. lxiv. 8. And, in a more special sense, we are his children by adoption, Gal. iii. 26. And therefore we are under the highest obligations to him as our Father. The love of children to parents is founded on gratitude for benefits received which can never be requited, and ought in reason to be proportioned to those benefits, especially if they flow from a conscience of duty in the parent. And what duty more natural than to love our benefactors? What love and gratitude then are due to him from whom we have received the greatest benefits, even that of our being and every thing that contributes to the comfort of it!

1.) As his children we must honour him; that is, we must speak honourably of him and for him, and carefully avoid every thing that may tend to dishonour his holy name and ways, Mal. i. 6.

2.) We must apply to him for what we want. Whither should children go but to their father for protection, help, and relief, in every danger, difficulty, and distress?

3.) We must trust his power, and wisdom, and paternal goodness, to provide for us, take care of us, and do for us that which is best. To be anxiously fearful what will become of us, and discontented and perplexed under the apprehension of future evils, whilst we are in the hands and under the care of "our Father who is in heaven," is not to act like children. Earthly parents cannot avert from their children all the calamities they fear, because their wisdom and power are limited? but our all-wise and almighty Father in heaven can. They may possibly want love and tenderness for their offspring, but our heavenly Father cannot for his. See Isa. xlix. 15.

4.) We must quietly acquiesce in his disposals, and not expect to see into the wisdom of his will. It would be indecent and undutiful in a child to dispute his parents' authority, or question their wisdom, or neglect their orders, every time he could not discern the reason and design of them. Much more unreasonable and unbecoming is such behaviour towards God, "who giveth no account of any of his matters," whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are "past finding out," Job xxxiii. 13; Rom. xi. 33.

5.) We must patiently submit to his discipline and correction. Earthly parents may sometimes punish their children through passion, or for their pleasure, but our heavenly Father always corrects his for their profit (Heb. xii. 10), and only if needs be (1 Pet. i. 6), and never so much as their iniquities deserve, Ezra. ix. 13. Under his fatherly rebukes, then, let us be ever humble and submissive. Such, now, is the true filial disposition. Such a temper and such a behaviour should we show towards God, if we would act in character as his children.

These then are the two special relations which, as creatures, we stand in to God.

And not to act towards him in the manner before mentioned is to show that we are ignorant of, or have not yet duly considered, our obligations to him as his subjects and his children, or that we are yet ignorant both of God and ourselves. Thus we see how truly it has been said, "He that is a stranger to himself is a stranger to God, and to everything that may denominate him wise and happy."

II. There is another important relation, that in which we stand to Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. The former was common to us as men; this is peculiar to us as Christians, and opens to us a new scene of duties and obligations, which a Christian can never forget that does not greatly forget himself; for, as Christians, we are the disciples, the followers, and the servants of Christ, redeemed by him.

1. As the disciples of Christ we are to learn of him, to take our religious sentiments only from his gospel, in opposition to all the authoritative dictates of men, who are weak and fallible as ourselves. "Call no man master on earth." While some affect to distinguish themselves by party-names, as the Corinthians formerly did (for which the apostle blames them), one saying, "I am of Paul," another, "I am of Apollos," another, "I am of Cephas" (1 Cor. i. 12), let us remember that we are the disciples of Christ, and in this sense make mention of his name only. It is really injurious to it to seek to distinguish ourselves by any other. There is more carnality in such party-distinctions than many good people are aware of, though not more than the apostle Paul (who was unwillingly placed at the head of one himself) has apprised them of. We are of Christ; our concern is to honour that superior denomination by living up to it, and to adhere inflexibly to his gospel as the only rule of our faith, the guide of our life, and the foundation of our hope, whatever contempt or abuse we may suffer either from the profane or bigoted part of mankind for so doing.

2. As Christians we are followers of Christ, and are therefore bound to imitate him, to copy after that most excellent pattern he has set us (1 Pet. ii. 21), to see that the same holy temper be in us that was in him, and to manifest it in the same manner as he did. To this he calls us (Matt. xi. 29); and a man is no further a Christian than as he is a follower of Christ, aiming at a more perfect conformity to that most perfect example which he has set us of universal goodness.

3. As Christians we are the servants of Christ; and the various duties which servants owe to their masters in any degree, those we owe in the highest degree to him, who expects we should behave ourselves in his service with that fidelity, and zeal, and steady regard to his honour and interest, at all times, which we are bound to by virtue of this relation, and to which his unmerited and unlimited goodness and love lay us under infinite obligations. We are moreover his redeemed servants, and as such are under the strongest motives to love and trust him. This deserves to be more particularly considered, because it opens to us another view of human nature, in which we should often survey ourselves, if we desire to know ourselves, and that is as depraved or degenerate beings. The inward contest we so sensibly feel, at some seasons especially, between a good and a bad principle (called in scripture language the flesh and the spirit), of which some of the wisest heathens seem not to have been ignorant, this, I say, is demonstration that, some way or other, the human nature has contracted an ill bias (and how that came about the sacred scriptures have sufficiently informed us), and that it is not what it was when it came originally out of the hands of its Maker; so that the words which St. Paul spoke, with reference to the Jews in particular, are justly applicable to the state of mankind in general. "There is none righteous, no, not one; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one."* This is a very mortifying, but an undeniable truth. It forms one of the first principles of the science of self-knowledge, and is very necessary to be attended to if we would be sensible of the duty and obligations we owe to Christ as the great Redeemer, in which character he appears for the relief and recovery of mankind under this their universal depravity. Now we cannot hold our most comfortable or obdiential relations to Christ without seeking and endeavouring, by divine assistance, to subdue and mortify all our depraved appetites, passions, and inclinations, without taking up our cross and following him in the regeneration.†

III. We must also consider the relation in which, if Christians, we stand to the

* I am not aware that this was said of the Jews only; I think it was without limitation.

† This closing sentence of the paragraph is not in Mr. Mason's Treatise, and I have omitted the rest of his paragraphs on this head, that I might not extend my extract to an undue length. The paragraph on our relation to the Holy Spirit I have also taken the liberty to introduce, to complete the view given.

Holy Spirit, no less to the divine Father and the Son. The part which he acts in the economy of redemption is that of the sanctifier of the church, from which office he seems to derive his name. As his business is to carry into effect the eternal purposes of the Father, and the redeeming love of the Son, so it is only through his almighty agency that any of the fallen race of Adam are regenerated, called, sanctified, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No sinful mortal ever understands the truth as it is in Jesus but by his teaching, or believes it but by his persuasion, or obeys it but through his power and influence. He opens the eyes of our understanding, illuminates our dark minds, causes us to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, and sanctifies us through the word of truth. Hence we are said to "grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption"—to "resist the Holy Ghost," &c. Nor is there any thing which more evinces the depravity of our nature, or exhibits a more awful view of the power of darkness over the carnal mind, than the actual resistance which is made to his sacred influences, the neglect and disregard that is paid to his suggestions, the want of reliance on his aid as the Spirit of grace and supplication, and the contempt of that guiding light which he is continually throwing upon our path. Our relative duties to him must correspond with the nature of his gracious offices, as the Spirit of light, and peace, and consolation, of holiness and truth. While it is the Holy Spirit that works in us both to will and to do, we must manifest our co-operation with him, by exercising the power we possess for this end, and cherishing his sacred influences; by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God; by praying for intimate communion with him and for the completion in us of the work of sanctification. And it must always be remembered that there is a sin against the Holy Ghost which "shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come."

IV. Due regard is to be had to the several relations in which we stand to our fellow-creatures, and the obligations which result from them. We must remember the condescension, benignity, and love that are due to inferiors; the affability, friendship, and kindness we ought to show to equals, the regard, deference, and honour we owe to superiors; and the candour, integrity, and benevolence we owe to all.

The particular duties requisite in these relations are too numerous to mention here. Let it suffice to say that if a man does not well consider the several relations in which he stands to others, and does not take care to preserve the decorum and propriety of those relations, he may justly be charged with self-ignorance. And this is so evident in itself, and so generally allowed, that nothing is more common than to say, when a man does not behave with due decency to his superiors, such a one "does not understand himself." But why may not this with equal justice be said to those who act in an undue manner towards their inferiors? The expression, I know, is not so often thus applied; but I see no reason why it should not be, since one is as common and as plain an instance of self-ignorance as the other. Nay, of the two, perhaps, men in general are more apt to be defective in their conduct towards those beneath them than towards those that are above them; and the reason seems to be, because an apprehension of the displeasure of their superiors, and the detrimental consequences that may accrue from it, may be a check upon them, and engage them to pay the just regards which they expect; but there being no such check to restrain men from violating the duties they owe to their inferiors (from whose displeasure they have little to fear), they are more ready, under certain temptations, to treat them in an unbecoming manner. And as wisdom and self-knowledge will direct a man to be particularly careful lest he neglect those duties he is more apt to forget, so, as to the duties he owes to inferiors, in which he is most in danger of transgressing, he ought more strongly to urge upon himself the indispensable obligations of religion and conscience. And if he does not, but suffers himself, through the violence of ungoverned passions, to be transported into the excesses of rigour, tyranny, and oppression, towards those whom God and nature have put into his power, it is certain he does not know himself, is not acquainted with his own particular weakness, is ignorant of the duty of his relation, and, whatever he may think of himself, he has not the true spirit of government, because he wants the art of self-government. For he that is unable to govern himself can never be fit to govern others.

Would we therefore know these, the several relations in which we stand, we must be careful of their nature, in order to maintain the propriety and to fulfil the duties of those relationships.

When it is considered that all the decencies, all the comforts of the social order, depend on our fulfilling relative duties in a suitable manner, it will

not be thought inexcusable that I should occupy so many pages upon this subject. The divine benevolence is seen in binding mankind together by the several relations of life, and in your endeavours to enforce the duties of these relations on your hearers, on gospel principles, you may expect the divine assistance and blessing.

According to the plan proposed we shall now proceed to consider the relation between types and antitypes. The New Testament points out this relation, and it will be admitted that some system for managing texts of this character is desirable. Mr. Simeon has shown his sense of the importance of this relation by devoting fifty discourses to the subject in his second volume, under the heads of typical persons, typical institutions, and typical events. The first example I shall lay before you is from Mr. Simeon, Gal. iv. 22—24, &c.

He considers Sarah and Agar, with their children, as types of the two covenants of scripture. This relation is closely marked; and the skeleton formed on the subject is of great value, as it elucidates a very difficult passage of sacred scripture. "We observe," says Mr. S., "a corresponding difference between the two women and their offspring, and the two covenants and their offspring." Here observe that, though he speaks of differences, yet his design is to show the relation that the types had to their antitypes. This appears in their nature, disposition, conduct, and end.

I. In their nature. One (Ishmael) a common birth, the son of a slave, consequently partaking of the mother's state. The other (Isaac) the son of a lawful wife, and of special promise, and under very special circumstances, by a kind of miracle. (See the history.) Now see the relation this has with the two characters of the natural and the gracious man, between whom many circumstances agree, but the important ones differ. The one is born under circumstances of bondage to the law of God, and in him a legal spirit prevails—"he is born after the flesh;" but the other is "born after the Spirit," and under "the promise of eternal life"—in every view the most extraordinary imaginable.

II. In their disposition. One (Ishmael), being born of the bond-woman, was himself a slave, subject to a slavish disposition and a servile spirit. The other (Isaac), the child of promise, felt all that freedom of spirit which an affectionate and beloved child is privileged to enjoy. Every action of each would follow these circumstances; in one case it would be the consequence of fear, or a selfish expectation of reward; in the other case, it would result from love, filial affection; it would be a free service, and of the most generous kind.*

III. In their conduct. This follows their respective dispositions with a precision that is wonderful: both obey (it is supposed), but from different principles. The malignancy, the jealousy, the ill-will of Ishmael against Isaac, for no other reason than because the sovereignty of God had distinguished the rival, are remarkable. The antitype corresponds, as is evident from St. Paul's words: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise; but, as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

IV. In their end. Ishmael, by his conduct, brought upon himself that very exclusion which he had confidently supposed would never take place; and Isaac in due time inherited the portion which, in dependence on God's word, he had professed to expect. Nor was the difference made through the partiality of the parents, but by the express command of God himself, Gen. xxi. 10—12.

Here is the relation recurring in the last instance; and it is a very solemn one indeed. Those who live and die under the law, will, like Ishmael, be cast out of God's family; though there may be pleaded a natural affinity, yet "he that made them will not have mercy on them." This arises not from an inevitable necessity, or decree of reprobation, for

* The relation these two personages have in disposition of mind to those of the natural and gracious man is so obvious, that Mr. Simeon's description need not be transcribed.

the scriptures mention no such exclusion, but from their own obstinate adherence to the old-covenant state, in contempt of the provisions of the new. On the other hand, heirs of grace will be heirs of glory.

I beg leave here to remind you, my brethren, that you ought, on all suitable occasions, to show the people that an obstinate adherence to the covenant of works is, in fact, a rejection of the gospel as revealing the only way of salvation, and that this rejection is a moral evil of the most grave nature, because it places any individual at a far greater distance from salvation than all other sins whatever. I allow that it is perfectly natural to cleave to the covenant of works, but it is human nature in its most blind and infatuated form; and surely this is not to be urged in extenuation, for it is the most sinful as well as the most silly act of a human being, and therefore is the very worst plea that can be set up. Even a cleaving in part to this error mends the matter but little, for works wholly or grace wholly must be adopted, as a proof of which I may observe that the Epistle to the Galatians was designed to forbid this mixture, this abominable anomaly. See also Rom. xi. 6.

Mr. Simeon on Gen. xlix. 22—24. Here the author considers Joseph as a type of Christ.* The relation of the type with its antitype is pursued by Mr. S. with a clearness of method, accuracy of remark, and closeness of analogy, which can scarcely be exceeded. He considers the resemblance of Joseph to our blessed Saviour in four particulars:—He views Joseph,

I. In his distinguishing character. Joseph is represented in the text as “a fruitful bough.” Each of Jacob’s sons became the head of one tribe: Joseph by his two sons had two tribes of Israel. (May I add his fruitfulness in good and noble deeds?) *Jesse* was that “beautiful and glorious branch” which was in due time to spring from “*Jesse’s* root,” “the fruit whereof was to fill the whole earth.” In all things *Jesus* was to have the preeminence,” yet the likeness is not broken. See Isa. iv. 2, xi. 1, and xxvii. 6; Ps. lxxii. 16; Gen. xv. 5, and xxii. 17; Ps. lxxx. 9—11, &c.

II. In his grievous sufferings.

III. His unshaken constancy.

IV. His glorious advancement.

Mr. Simeon’s enlargements are quite correct, and replete with instruction; but it is not necessary to quote them, as all the materials are in your hands, and you can find little difficulty in arranging them in your own manner from Joseph’s history (Gen. xxxvii. and xxxix.), and the history of Christ’s sufferings is to be collected from the Psalms, the prophets, and the gospels. The proper improvements of the subject will also be obvious.

Some wiseacre may say, “Suppose such resemblances be found between Joseph and Christ, what ends are answered by them?” I say, in some cases resemblances prove nothing but the ingenuity or industry of finding them out; but here,

First, God has established a real relation between the two, the type and the great antitype. He who saw “the end from the beginning” raised up certain characters and controlled certain events for our instruction. These types have really a prophetic character; they might be dark to the early ages, though that is not certain, but in their fulfilment they add to the stability of truth. They were also symbolical; they were pictures of

* While desirous of preserving a proper medium between the visionary typist and him who allows nothing to be a type but what the New Testament expressly warrants, we must urge against the latter the absolute certainty of Joseph being a type of Christ, although there be no colour of warrant for it in the New Testament. Such a series of parallels could hardly have existed without a divine ordination.—[See our previous note on the literature of this subject, p. 52.]

heavenly things, as St. Paul shows; and the New Testament application of Jonah's concealment or imprisonment in the belly of the fish proves the point. Some say that such references were only intended by way of accommodation or illustration, but this I deny; we may enervate the scriptures till two-thirds of them mean nothing, but how then could Christ have said "Search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of me?" Christ does not say, Search the scriptures, and there you will find many passages that testify of me; but the meaning is, they wholly testify of Christ, or his church and people; and without our idea of relation the scriptures become like the tables of Moses, broken to pieces; they are no longer a glorious whole.

Secondly, Nothing could be better adapted to the instruction of the early ages than these venerable materials. The appearance of typical characters was a vehicle of moral instruction even before the relation of which we treat was understood, and they will continue to impart instruction to the latest posterity. When these ancient types conveyed specific intimations respecting the character and work of the coming Saviour, they became exceedingly precious; and doubtless the pious Jew was taught to look beyond the outward emblems—the shadows of good things to come, and to understand their relation to him of whom Moses (through the medium of these figures) is declared to have written. Even those examples in which the type was obscure, but which contained a near resemblance to the Messiah, were sources of real instruction. Here is Joseph—an extraordinary character. This extraordinary character is preserved very wonderfully; we see virtue suffering unmerited cruelty, yet afterwards proving triumphant. But the excellences of this character are found in their resemblance to him who is perfect. As now the Christian whose life is most like Christ's in all circumstances carries our minds back to him, so when we see a venerable character of antiquity approximating to the great Author of our salvation, and agreeing in so many circumstances, the relation of one to the other gives force and excellency to the instruction thus conveyed.

I will now close this part of the subject by referring you to John iii. 14, 15, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," &c. The relation of this type with Christ the antitype will not be disputed. I think every minister ought to preach once on this text in every station where he is called to labour. The answerableness of type and antitype may be made out in various forms, but the matter of the discourse should satisfy these three heads:—

First, The occasion in both cases, of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, and of Christ being lifted up on the cross, should be satisfactorily made out by a statement of facts. There was a real necessity existing in both cases or occurrences. Christ pronounces a *must* to confirm the point.

Secondly, The relation should appear in the resemblances of the two histories, so as to produce the intended gospel picture, suitable to the type as well as its antitype, so as to show that the gospel was really preached to the bitten Israelites (Heb. iv. 2) under the figure of a serpent so exhibited; and on the other hand that that exhibition was a lively pattern of what was about to take place on Mount Calvary, and a true index to it, explanatory of that part of human redemption in which it is confessed on all hands there is mystery, 1 Tim. iii. 16. You will particularly explain that, though this is an assisting representation of the benefits we may receive by Christ Jesus, yet it is not sufficient to us without faith. The Israelite was to look upon

the serpent, and we are to look to Jesus, to "behold the Lamb of God." In both cases faith is absolutely necessary; for there is no positive demonstrative evidence before us, such as a logician or a mathematician would require, of the connexion of the means and the end as to redemption by the cross, nor even of the sufficiency of the means, nor of our personal interest in it. You will therefore point out that God has given the saving point to all-efficacious faith (Heb. xi. 1), a method far more safe to us weak creatures than demonstrations could ever be.

In this second part, besides the necessity of faith on our part, there are other resemblances which require to be noticed—mercy in both cases, sovereignty, publicity, and the total exclusion of all other remedies, Acts iv. 12. Then,

Thirdly, the relation of type with antitype should be shown in their similar complete sufficiency to their respective ends. No preparatory process, no additional application, was necessary to effect the cure on the part of the Israelites; they were simply required to look at the brazen serpent; and in every case, however inadequate the means might appear, the cure was complete. So also with regard to Christ, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

We now come to consider the relation of prophecies with their accomplishment. The simplest method of tracing this relation is that adopted by Mr. Simeon on the first prophecy, Gen. iii. 15, "I will put enmity," &c. The plan is,

I. Make some remarks on the prophecy: viz. on the occasion, on its suitableness, and on its seasonableness.

II. Trace the accomplishment.

It is not always necessary that the relationship should be absolutely or immediately apparent, for several reasons. The event predicted may not depend on any one certain prophecy; but may, as to essential particulars, be secured by many. Many of the prophecies are confessedly "dark sayings." The prophecy of the foregoing text is mystical. Its blessings were in a manner concealed by a cloud, not indeed a very dark one, but just sufficiently luminous to afford comfort. A remedy for sin is strongly implied; grace was undoubtedly intimated; this grace was to be revealed by some great character that was to be strictly and properly, though wonderfully, "the seed of the woman," corresponding with Isa. vii. 14, and with the fact as stated in gospel history. It is by the help of the gospel history that we are enabled to trace the relation of the prophecy in this text with its accomplishment. The seed of the woman Christ certainly was. The enmity intimated in the text between Christ and Satan was fully manifested, and also between Christ's spiritual seed and the seed of the serpent. Christ was certainly wounded, as represented in the text; his heel was bruised. But Satan was crushed; "his head," where all the venom of the serpent lies, was "bruised;" his full destruction is yet reserved. Now each of these particulars you will examine and state *seriatim*, and then it will appear that the relation of the prophecy and accomplishment is wonderfully correct. God has faithfully made good the assurance given to our first parents in a season of awful gloom and despondency, and our faith is strengthened by the happy correspondence.*

* When time and circumstances permit, Bishop Newton on the Prophecies should be studied, as also the Index to Prebendary Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures. [To these should be added Davison on Prophecy, and Keith, and especially the great work of Dr. Fairbairn, Prophecy Viewed in its Distinctive Nature, its

Mr. Simeon has favoured us with sixty similar examples ; and almost all prophecies would admit of being treated in the same manner, though perhaps some variety of method might be introduced.

When we consider the vast range of prophecy that has actually been fulfilled in Christ, and the importance which Christ himself gave to the predictions concerning himself in the discourse which he addressed to his disciples on the way to Emmaus, that he took a general view of all that related to himself, and thus conveyed conviction to the minds of those hitherto "slow-of-heart" disciples, it must surely be evident that Christ's ministers ought not to neglect the prophecies, lest they fall under the same censure ; and, if ministers be ignorant the people will be so. I would not, however, be understood to recommend or approve curious speculations respecting unfulfilled prophecy, now so much in fashion. So numerous, indeed, and so diversified are the hypotheses stated and confidently defended as undoubted truth by modern writers on prophecy, and so great the obscurity which they have succeeded in throwing around the subject, that many have been led to question whether prophecy be intended to be understood till it shall be completely unravelled by the events to which it refers, and we are almost induced to look at every new attempt as another ingenious guess at the meaning of a seemingly inexplicable enigma. Perhaps those prophecies which relate to the general spread of the gospel should, in our times, be regarded as particularly deserving attention. However, the young preacher will very properly consider prophecy as a subordinate subject of study, and one which will only occasionally occupy a place in his ministrations.

Having considered the first three divisions of our Topic, I shall now pursue the subject to its termination. The plan which I have adopted affords me the opportunity of treating on some branches of public discourse which I conceive to be very important to the due edification of the people, without altering my original intentions ; and, though I give but brief sketches, the student can pursue them to any length he may think proper. Or these hints may possibly provoke some abler pen to do the subject more ample justice. In the mean time I proceed to treat on the relation of parables with their doctrine. I do not pretend to prove this relation, but to improve it, or to draw instruction from it. I do not recollect one parable uttered by our Lord that can be of dubious interpretation, though there were some things delivered by him in the form of parable which were, in fact, rather prophecies, carrying our views to the end of time, that yet are dark to us ; but, leaving such out of the account, the parables and their doctrinal import, either by immediate intuition or from our Lord's familiar explanations of them, were readily comprehended, at least by his disciples : their drift and design were abundantly apparent, promoting various distinct objects, and displaying the wisdom of Christ which eminently shone in them. Truly we may say that in them "grace poured from his lips" in copious measure, and in every varied form of speech.

"These parables are supereminent in beauty, in simplicity, in importance, and in variety ; they are of universal application, and have an imperishable ascendancy over the heart of man." "Still our Lord's parables arraign guilt, redress misery, and open the page of immortality. They have

Special Function, and Proper Interpretation. Douglas's *Structure of Prophecy* is an admirable brief view of the subject. Most worthy of attention are Lord Bacon's remarks on it, scattered throughout his works. See especially his *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. Sec. I. 1, and III. 2.]

so pressed nature into the service of religion that it is impossible to walk abroad without connecting the natural with the spiritual world. The preacher that goes into the corn-field shall see, in the sowing of the seed and the hopes of the husbandman, his own present duties, anxieties, and expectations,—in the dying of the grain in order to be reproduced the need of his own mortality and the triumphant issue of his faith,—in the growth of the corn his own advancement in religion,—in the weeds which choke it the mixed state of society,—in the ripening of the ear the preparation of the nations for the reception of the gospel,—in the harvest the end of the world,—and in the gathering home of the shocks of corn, fully ripe, his own eternal rest. If one part of nature is so instructive, if one little plant teaches us so many and such important truths, what advantage must it not be to follow our Lord through the whole range of creation, which he subordinated to spiritual purposes !”*

Mr. Simeon on Luke x. 30—36. Subject, “The parable of the good Samaritan.” The relation of the parable with its moral or doctrine is pointed out by our blessed Lord. The moral is, Our proper duty to our neighbour, one-half of the whole law of our Maker. Mr. Simeon’s division is, Explain the parable, and improve it.

In the first part you will show the occasion upon which the parable was spoken, and state the circumstances of the parable as detailed in the text. Brief explanation and comment will best suit in this place, taking care to show how suitable the representation was to the proud self-righteous character that gave occasion to its delivery.

In the second place you will expose the self-righteous character, and the miserable littleness of his soul, his contracted ideas of benevolence, the summary manner in which he consigns to perdition all but himself and a few ultra lords of the ascendance of the moral system, whom Jehovah could not do without in the regions of Paradise. Animadvert freely upon the blindness and gross ignorance of such as resemble the Pharisees of our Lord’s time, in supposing a partiality in their favour while so totally destitute of the love of God, which in the divine law is placed before all other moral obligations, and on their want of real love to any creature except their own-selves. Show them that this self-love is the only foundation of those morals that they seem to have, and that if they have any zeal for God it is an ignorant zeal, seeking to do God service by persecuting, hating, and slaying the Lord’s people, wherever they acquire power to do it.

Then contrast this conduct with that of the good Samaritan. You may observe that, “in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him,”—that Jesus, by this Samaritan and the centurion, was giving an intimation that the time was near at hand when God would cast off the Jews as a people, and raise up a people to show forth his praise who had long been an outcast,—that church privileges have no limits but the earth’s utmost boundaries,—and that the benevolent affections exercised by this good Samaritan were as first-fruits of the true Christian character and a pattern of what the world might expect when real Christianity should

* See Dr. Collyer’s Lectures on the Parables, Lect. iv. and v. ; or quotation from them in Jones’s Biblical Cyclopædia, vol. ii., under the word PARABLE. The student will also find advantage in consulting on this subject Horne’s Introduction, vol. ii., p. 276; Mr. More’s Christian Morals, vol. i., p. 108. [But see above all Trench’s Notes on the Parables, and Kirk’s Lectures on the Parables. Lisco’s little work is valuable ; so is Greswell, but too large. Alexander Knox has many invaluable remarks upon them. See especially Remains, vol. i. 448, *et seq.*]

obtain the ascendancy in the world. You will observe that this good man at once suspended all consideration about himself, ceased to prosecute his journey, sacrificed his own comforts, poured the best of sympathies into the sufferer's bosom, and oil into his wounds. His brotherly love, his compassion, his anxieties, harmonize with the spirit of the gospel. The beast that was to relieve his weariness he assigns to the afflicted; and, as he could not do enough himself, he interested others in his behalf, pledging himself to repay all charges, whatever they might be, for perfecting the cure of the unhappy sufferer. All this he did without any enquiry whether he was a worthy object and of the proper nation to whom courtesy might be shown.*

You must remark with what authority our Lord could exhibit this benevolence, being himself the bright sunshine of all its lovely qualities. The benevolence of Jesus vastly transcends that of this good Samaritan. He fortuitously became a deliverer; but Jesus came from heaven by design, the effect of eternal love, "to seek and to save that which was lost." He had compassion on the man's miseries; but Jesus on our guiltiness. He used means to heal the body; Jesus heals our souls. He expended his property to support the poor man; but Jesus spent his life in our service, and shed his blood for our redemption. He conducted the poor man to an inn; Jesus conducts us to glory. In some particulars the likeness is great, you will observe, but in others the similitude fails; so that I think you are scarcely warranted to consider it as affording a typical reference to Christ: for instance, Jesus was not a Samaritan by nation, nor did he travel in the style of the good Samaritan; and, though the same benevolence is common to both, yet Christ's love can have no parallel—it surpasses all love.

As Jesus had a high claim to recommend benevolence, so a similar confidence will attend his ministers when they are the true patterns of what they in words commend or preach. You will also observe that fine sentiments of humanity are of small value compared with the habit and practice of that virtue.

Thus reflecting upon the present parable, and so of most others, after you have explained the parable itself, you will proceed, in the second part to improve or enforce the relative obligation.

In general, as to the forms of your principal divisions, they must be of the simple kind, something like the accommodational; as, illustration and improvement—fact and inference—or by interrogatives—by observations—consider the scope of the parable and the lessons we should deduce from it—the principle inculcated and its importance in human life; here see Luke xiv. 7—10. Some will be best discussed by contrast, as Luke xviii. 13, 14—by comparison, as Matt. xxi. 28—31; so on Matt. xxv. 10, compare their character and contrast their end.

Some parables, however, admit a broader distribution, as Matt. xiii. 33. The metaphor and thing intended unite in three particulars: they are assimilating in their nature—mysterious in their operation—universal in their influence. Again, Matt. xviii. 32—35. Here the parable is changed into a subject, viz. the duty of forgiveness. You must speak of its extent—its reasonableness—and its necessity. Again, see Luke xv., The prodigal son. Let the verses be restricted to verses 23 and 24; but the view of the whole thing may be retained. Observe his departure—his return—his reception.

* All these contrasts should be reviewed in connexion with the 16th Topic.

It is quite unnecessary to trouble you with more detail,* but let me urge it upon you in discoursing on a parable carefully to preserve the lesson which the parable was originally framed to teach. Never attempt to affix more meanings to a parable, nor to make any other use of it than the one intended; and, if this appear at all doubtful, you must consult a judicious expositor. A lively imagination is in many respects a high qualification, but here it is liable to mislead. It has been held by the Greek Fathers that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we have a picture of fallen human nature in the wounded traveller: in the priest, man's state before the giving of the law (sacrifices existed then, but they brought no relief),—in the person of the Levite, man's state under the law, receiving no benefit by it,—in the person of the good Samaritan man's state under the Redeemer; he performs the kind offices which the priest and Levite left undone. But against this it is urged, and very properly, by Mr. Scott, that such a representation is not correct, as the sinner's state is not merely pitiable but guilty, that no reflection could lie against either the patriarchal or legal ages, for sacrifices were always good and effectual if mixed with faith in the Messiah to whom they pointed.

Other more pious than wise applications have been made of this parable. The oil and the wine have been supposed to represent the Spirit and blood of Christ in healing us, the inn his church, the host Christ's ministers, the two pence his two sacraments, &c.

We come now to consider the relation of miracles with their symbolical intendments. It is not my design to introduce any of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, not because they are deficient in interest or importance, in reference to instruction, for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," and no comparison is to be instituted between them and the miracles of the New Testament, to the disparagement of the former; but I omit them because, once for all, they are capable of the same rules of management in preaching as those are which I select, while a good expositor will afford the preacher the *materiel* of discourse on all or any of the more ancient displays of the divine interfering power over the ordinary course of nature. Besides, if I were to be extensive in my arrangement, I should defeat my purpose of brevity. Those who remain unsatisfied must consult more elaborate works. Dr. Collyer on Miracles is in many hands; Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures is very valuable; and on this point you can consult his general index. See also Bragg on Miracles, 2 vols. 8vo.†

With regard to the miracles of the New Testament, I shall take no further notice of them than to show the relation existing between them and their symbolical intendments, leaving the evidence they afford to the Messiahship of Jesus and the confirmation of the Christian religion to other works. My present time will be well employed if I should be so happy as to fix your attention and practice to this most important point of significancy which our Lord's divine acts of mercy carry with them, but which, I am sorry to say, seems so remote from the general view as to

* I have said nothing of the parables of the Old Testament, but see Dr. Collyer's Lectures, and Horne's Introduction; these are full on the subject. The management of them in discourses must be precisely similar to the foregoing.

[† See especially Trench's Notes on Miracles. In the recent literature of the subject we would especially commend for careful study Nature and the Supernatural by Dr. Bushnell, and the Supernatural in relation to the Natural by Dr. McCosh; also the Essay on Miracles in "Aids to Faith" by Dr. Mansel.]

induce me to justify my recommendation by referring to the opinions of others whose authority may supply what is lacking in my own.

"The design of miracles is to mark the divine interposition ; yet, when perusing the miracles recorded in the sacred writings, we are not to lose sight of the moral and religious instruction concealed under them, and especially under the miracles performed by our Saviour. All his miracles, indeed, were undoubtedly so many testimonies that he was sent from God, but they were much more than this ; for they were all of such a kind, and attended with such circumstances, as give us an insight into the spiritual state of man and the great work of his salvation. They were significant emblems of his designs, and figures aptly representing the benefits to be conferred by him upon mankind, and consequently have in them a spiritual sense. Thus he cast out evil spirits, who by divine Providence were permitted to exert themselves at that time and to possess many persons. By this act he showed that he came to destroy the empire of Satan, and seemed to foretell that, wheresoever his doctrine should prevail, idolatry, the doctrine of devils (compare Jer. x. 8, Ps. xxiv, 4, 1 Tim. iv. 1), and vice should be put to flight. He gave sight to the blind, a miracle well suited to him who brought immortality to light, and taught truth to an ignorant world. *Lucem caliganti reddidit mundo*, applied to Quintus Curtius, a Roman emperor, can be strictly applied to Christ, and to him alone. No prophet ever did this miracle before him, as none ever made the religious discoveries which he made. Our Saviour himself leads us to this observation, and sets his miracle in the same view, saying, 'I am the light of the world ; I have come into the world that those who see not might see.'

"He cured the deaf, the dumb, the lame, and the infirm, cleansed the lepers, and healed all manner of sicknesses—to show at the same time that he was the physician of souls, which have their diseases corresponding in some manner to those of the body, and are deaf, and dumb, and impotent, and paralytic, and leprous, in the spiritual sense. He fed the hungry multitudes by a miracle, which aptly represented his heavenly doctrines, and the gospel preached to the poor, and which he himself so explains : 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven ; if any man eat this bread, he shall live for ever.' He raised the dead, a miracle peculiarly suited to him who at the last day will call forth all mankind to appear before him ; and therefore, when he raised Lazarus, he uttered those majestic words, 'I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' He performed some miracles upon persons who were not of his own nation ; and it was so ordered by divine Providence that these persons—as the centurion, the Syrophenician woman, the Samaritan leper—should show a greater degree of faith and of gratitude than the Jews to whom the same favours were granted. This was an indication that the gospel should be more readily received by the Gentiles than by the Jews, and this our Saviour intimates, saying, when he had commended the centurion's faith, 'Many shall come from the east and the west,' &c.

"Lastly, the two states of the Gadarene demoniac (whom Christ healed), while under the influence of Satanic possession and when restored to his right mind, respectively represented the two states of man, first while living in a course of sinful practice, and, secondly, when 'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' listening to the precepts of the gospel, and walking in holiness and righteousness."—*Horne's Introduction*, vol. ii. 632—634, second edition.

After this long but excellent quotation, I am sure you are convinced of the importance of the symbolical intendment of miracles, for yourself and for your people. It is a part of the scheme of scripture, which is to convey a double sense, the ordinary and the more refined, or, as it is commonly called, the spiritual, and which is applicable chiefly to the Old Testament and the Gospels. Here under the government of a sober judgment you may rove with ever new delight. This secondary sense, or symbolical intendment, is not a creature of the fancy, but forms a part of the merciful design of our heavenly Father. It was no doubt this spiritual sense to which David referred when he prayed in these words, "Open thou my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" for the literal sense could not be much mistaken. For want of this spiritual sense the Jews are not to this day believers: there is a veil over their mind's eye; but this shall be taken away.

It is now necessary that I should give you that practical help which it is the design of these Lectures to afford, and I cannot better effect my purpose than by referring you to Mr. Simeon's introductory discourse to his Lectures on Miracles.

If we trace (says Mr. S.) Jesus in his circuits through the country, and view in every place the objects that surround him, we shall behold at one time the eyes he just now opened gazing on him with wonder and amazement, at another time the ears he has unstopped drinking in his words with insatiable eagerness and attention. Here we shall behold the hands he has restored to use stretched forth to proclaim his praise, and the feet he has strengthened leaping and dancing round him with inexpressible delight. There we shall hear the tongues he has loosed shouting with incessant acclamations, and see those whom he has dispossessed of devils sitting with composure at the feet of their benefactor. Sometimes we shall see the very dead start forth into life and vigour at his command, and either rapturously saluting their disconsolate relations or rending the air with their acclamations and hosannas.* Such accounts as these, if considered only in a temporal view, cannot but excite in us a sympathetic joy, and afford the most pleasing sensations; but no doubt they were intended also to convey some spiritual instruction, in which view they acquire an additional, and almost an infinite importance. In this view we propose to consider the following passage, Luke vi. 19: "And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him and healed them all." To illustrate this subject and improve it, we shall,

I. Trace the analogy between the miracles wrought by our Lord on the bodies of men and those which he still works on men's souls. For a more distinct elucidation we may observe,

1. There is a resemblance between the disorders of the body and the disorders of the soul. Many were brought to our Lord who were blind, deaf, leprosy, and possessed with devils; and such are men at this time, in a spiritual view. Like the Laodiceans, however they may think themselves "rich and increased with goods," they are "wretched, miserable, poor, and blind," and therefore have need to take counsel of our Lord, and to "anoint their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see." Their eyes must be opened before they will "turn from the power of Satan unto God." The natural man, too, is represented as deaf, as having ears and not hearing, as being unable to hear the voice of the good Shepherd, yea, as "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears." The leprosy also of sin lies deep in our hearts, as the prophet intimates, when, in allusion to the convicted leper, he says of himself and all around him, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Though demoniacal possessions were not properly diseases, yet are they always enumerated with them when the miracles of our Lord are recited; and, however humiliating the truth may be, it is certain that we are all, while in an unconverted state, possessed by Satan. The unbelieving world are blinded (2 Cor. iv. 4), governed (Eph. ii. 2), and led captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. And, whatever evil they are excited to commit, it is through the instigation of that wicked fiend, John xiii. 27.

* This is an instance of beautiful description, the subject of the third Topic.

2. There is a resemblance between the cures wrought by our Lord upon the bodies of men and those which he works upon their souls. Wherever the blessings of salvation are mentioned by the prophets, they are set forth by some highly figurative expressions, and by none more commonly than by those relating to bodily cures (as Isa. xxxv. 5, 6, 10), which figures are elsewhere explained as relating to the spiritual salvation of the church, Isa. xxxii. 3. The application which the apostles make of these prophecies proves this: compare Isa. liii. 4, with Matt. viii. 16, 17. Our Lord himself makes this application, John ix. 39.

3. There is a resemblance between the manner in which diseased persons applied to our Lord and the manner in which we should apply to him for spiritual healing. Of all the multitudes that approached to Jesus for healing there was not one who was not sensible of his disease. Every one came also with humility. Every one pressed his suit with earnestness, though with some different degrees of faith, as is manifest from the plain gospel history. It is hardly necessary to show how exactly this agrees with spiritual applicants.

4. There is a resemblance between the manner in which our Lord cured their disorders and the manner in which he will cure ours. Sometimes he healed his patients secretly, took them aside (as Mark vii. 33—35), sometimes openly. So now sometimes saving benefits are received unknown to the church, and sometimes with evident demonstration. Sometimes he cures his patient instantaneously (John v. 8), at other times gradually; we have exact parallels in every day's experience. Sometimes he used means, but these means were always of such a nature as to render the miracle an evident display of divine power (as in John ix. 6); frequently he wrought cures without employing any means.

II. Improve these observations. The multitude is not always a safe guide; but here it is perfectly so. Follow them in the convictions which they had of their need of Christ, in their earnestness, in their faith. No faith, no healing power; they believed, instead of reasoning, or questioning, or trying other means. This is our fair example. In the affairs of the body we apply to an eminent physician or surgeon without hesitation or doubt; we venture on many a scheme without doubt; we believe many a story without doubt; but in going to Christ we act a quite different part; here we are a composition of scepticism and inconsistency. But this conduct stands rebuked by the very character of Jesus: behold his compassion; behold his power; behold his impartiality; all are alike blessed that come to him. See the joy that follows the reception of these blessings, the honest readiness with which they acknowledge that their cures are wholly his: and see also with what promptitude they go and tell to others what a Saviour they have found.

The following treatment of a miracle by Mr. Simeon is admirable. Mark v. 25—29.

I. Sin has introduced many lamentable evils into the world.

1. Of a natural kind. (Give instances)

2. There is a melancholy parallel of a spiritual kind. See Isa. i. 5, 6, and many similar passages.

II. We are prone to rest in carnal methods of removing them. We are exactly like this afflicted woman; we first spend all that we have before we come to Christ; we flee to duties, to penitence, promises of amendment. But here is our error; if we rest in these, how proper soever, it leads to disappointment.

III. However desperate our disorders be, the Lord Jesus is able to heal them. This afflicted woman's disease baffled all the art of medicine, yet she was instantly healed by a touch of his garment, by that virtue that "went out of him." So sinners immersed in guilt will, on believing, be instantly pardoned and healed.

IV. The more we honour Christ, by faith, the more he will bless and honour us. She was assured that, if she could only press through the crowd as to be able to touch the hem of Christ's garment, she should be whole. Christ healed her, and publicly acknowledged her faith, and said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

LECTURE XIII.

TOPIC V.

OBSERVE WHETHER SOME THINGS BE NOT SUPPOSED WHICH ARE NOT EXPRESSED.

"THIS source of invention is different from the former, for the former is confined to things really relative ; but this speaks in general of things *supposed* which have no relation to each other ; as, when we speak of a change of place, what the schools call the *terminus a quo* necessarily supposes the *terminus ad quem*, and the same in the reversed order ; or, in plain English, an arrival at a certain place supposes a place of setting out, and the contrary. Again, a covenant supposes at least two contracting parties, though often there are several. A reconciliation, or peace effected, supposes war and enmity. A victory supposes enemies, arms, a combat, disabled artillery, loss of territory, &c. Life supposes death, and death life, &c.

"In preaching from Rom. xii. 17, 'Recompense to no man evil for evil,' it might be proper to notice the truths supposed, as, 1. That sin has thrown mankind into a state of disorder, so that men are exposed to injuries and insults from each other, and especially the good from the bad. 2. It is supposed that Christianity, with all its distinguished privileges, exempts not the good from persecution ; nay, our Saviour says they may expect persecution, and that it is almost a necessary appendage of Christianity. Having established these points, you observe that the gospel (complete in every thing) prescribes a suitable temper and conduct to all its friends ; that is, not to recompense evil, nor to resort to the law of retaliation, 'An eye for an eye,' &c. ; but, on the contrary, Christ says, 'Love your enemies,' &c. These implied truths must not however be far-fetched, nor be introduced irrelevantly. They must also be important, either for general instruction, or for throwing light on the text ; otherwise you will deliver trifling impertinences under the name of implied truths." So far Mons. Claude.

Of the different plans of sermonizing which we are considering, some are comparatively easy of execution, others require considerable ingenuity, and some demand very great caution. Plans formed upon our fifth topic are of this last description. "Observe whether some things be not supposed which are not expressed." Most certainly this is very often the case, and it is quite proper to notice these unexpressed things with a temperate license ; but it must be allowed, as was noticed in reference to observation, that a door is here opened that is liable to much abuse in practice. When we speak upon a text, and what it expresses only, a boundary is cast around our thoughts : but, when we find more liberty, we are apt to venture too far. Observations and implications, or things supposed, offer us a temptation which renders restraint necessary at some point or other, which sound principles and the honour of truth will, it is hoped, point out to us. As this topic is of considerable consequence in its general uses, viz., of observation, illustration, argumentation, and division, I shall offer my free thoughts upon one of the principal words by which it is expressed. "See if there be not some things *supposed* which are not expressed." Now the word *implied* is almost the only word that will convey the author's meaning.* One would

* It is pretty much the same as taking a thing for granted upon the principles of connexion or induction, as without such an admission we cannot make a complete sense of the text.

have thought there had slipped an error into the translation from the French ; but this cannot be case, as the word is radically the same in French and English. Precision in terms of science is of the utmost consequence : we must not be deceived by an apparent synonyme ; we must not even trust too implicitly to dictionaries ; but, when much depends upon the exactness of a word, we must venture upon its very philosophy, and accurately define and distinguish such word from those which appear to convey the same meaning. *To suppose, to infer, to imply*, are words which at first view seem alike. To suppose a thing however is to lay down a thing without proof ; so we say here. In France, using the word *supposer*, they explain it by *penser, croire, s'imaginer, to think, to believe, to imagine* ; so that on both sides the water it is to advance something without proof. Again, to infer is to bring in one truth as a necessary consequence of another truth previously established. Neither of the above words, therefore, suits the purpose : the first is too weak, the second too strong, for the topic. *To imply* is to involve or comprise one thing within another ; that is the general sense, and it is to our present purpose. It is to involve, comprise, or include one thing or several things unexpressed within another thing that is expressed, and which other thing or things are needful to complete the sacred writer's meaning, or to illustrate the truth of the text, or to prevent a wrong idea in the auditory respecting the subject in hand. Now this word *imply* is that which we want for the present occasion. Admitting this, the title of our topic will run thus :—Observe whether some things be not implied which are not expressed.

It appears to me that such implied things have some relation to the subject that originated them, though Mons. Claude is of opinion they have not. The very example which he quotes to show that there is no relation, but a supposition only, I think utterly fails. The terminus *a quo* and the terminus *ad quem* are certainly associated together in our minds, and that association is and can be nothing else but relation.* Those other things which he supposes to have no relation are a covenant and its parties, &c. ; but surely here is a relation, something more than a supposition. The truth is, he was intent upon showing a difference between his fourth and fifth topics. These are, however, but two branches of one stem, though pointing or leaning different ways, and in fact answering different purposes.

I hope it is quite unnecessary to point out to you the abuses of implication, which are the produce either of an uncultivated mind, a mind too wild and luxuriant, and consequently weak, or we may call it a mind “not seasoned with grace,” or of a judgment ill formed and premature. It is grossly wrong to imply any thing from the literal sense of scripture where the spiritual sense only can be admitted. The disciples implied that it was lawful to use material swords in defence of a religious cause when Christ only meant that the time had come to be prepared with spiritual armour. They likewise thought that the refusal of the Samaritans to receive Christ implied their utter reprobation, and therefore they asked Christ whether they should not invoke the sentence of that reprobation immediately upon them. This case, I allow, differs from the former ; but both are wrong. The truth is, we are too apt to imply the reprobation of our fellow Christians because they “follow not with us,” or receive not our doctrines into their houses of prayer, or admit them not as parts of their creed. It is, I

* It is common to say “There is never a hill without a dale ;” the moral of the adage is founded on the above-named association.

conceive, very wrong to imply any thing from a text but that which is necessary for real practical uses, such things as the people ought to know, and must know. Speculative notions and things remotely implied, if they must come out, let it be from the press, not the pulpit.

But I rely upon your good sense fully to supply the place of any further remarks upon the negative part of our subject; and, if you do not need these remarks at all, hand them over to others who do.

The proper uses of things implied are several that suit our present purpose, excluding that of furnishing occasional observations, which has been sufficiently noticed already, and that of argument, for which we have here no place.

First, Things implied, I think, will often very properly form the first principal division of a discourse. Then the division would run thus:—

I. What is implied.

II. What is expressed.

Take the passage before alluded to from Isa. lv. 6: "Seek you the Lord," &c. Here,

I. It is implied, 1. That God is (while we are in a state of nature) far from us. 2. That we are far from him. 3. That a time may arrive in which God will not be found of us though we seek him; as Prov. i. 24, &c.

II. Attend to what is expressed: "Seek you the Lord."

It is true we might here also dilate upon what is implied in "seeking the Lord;" but it is preferable to stir up the people to repentance and prayer by all the moving considerations contained in the chapter whence the text is selected, as—

1. By the wretched state of want and misery denoted by hunger and thirst, ver. 1, and so like that of the prodigal mentioned in the gospel.

2. By the vanity of all our efforts in search of happiness from any other source, ver. 2.

3. By assurances of grace, and an abundant supply.

4. By the language of tender entreaty and gracious assurance found in other remaining parts of the chapter.

You will at once perceive that this discourse should be in the style of continued application, corresponding with the general style of the chapter and with the feelings of a tender-hearted preacher, intent upon winning souls to Christ, and with the fulness of gospel blessings.*

Dr. Blair manages this kind of division with great skill in his sermon on Ps. xxxi. 15, "My times are in thy hand," which he thus paraphrases: "My fate depends on thee. The duration of my life, and all the events which are in future days to fill it up, are entirely at thy disposal." This is very elegantly expressed; but it is strange that the doctor should use the word *fate*, for he does not appear to me to be a fatalist or even a predestinarian. Perhaps the term fate may agree with his philosophizing discourse; for such his discourse is, and truly excellent in its kind. He describes,

I. What the text implies.

1. It implies that our times are not in our own hands.

2. They are not in the hands either of our enemies or our friends; here would hang some strange contingencies.

II. What is more directly expressed. They are in God's hands.

1. As a supreme, irresistible Ruler.

2. As a merciful guardian and Father.

III. The text admonishes us,

1. To check vain curiosity.

* Mr. Simeon gives us a skeleton on this text; and the Evangelical Magazine, p. 424, for the year 1810, treats on it.

2. To improve the term of life allotted to us (Eccles. ix. 10), "to redeem the time," &c.

3. To submit patiently to God's pleasure.

The first part is all that was wanted for our purpose: the things implied are of the genuine kind. The rest of the skeleton I have transposed so as to make it appear better in a compendium. The doctor seems to have taken the hint of his discourse from the remarks of our excellent commentator, Matthew Henry, who observes on this passage, "It is a great support to those who have God for their God that their times are in his hand; and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, ver 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleases, according to the counsel of his will. Our times (all events that concern us, and the timing of them) are at God's disposal; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, nor in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's; every man's judgment proceedeth from him. David does not, in his prayers, prescribe to God, but subscribes to him. 'Lord, my times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so: they could not be in a better hand. Thy will be done.'"

Blair's sermons are so admirably calculated to illustrate Claude's principles that I could wish some ingenious hand would alter them, so as to turn them into gospel sermons, for the benefit of students in general.

Mr. Beddome also gives us an instance to our present purpose, in vol. i., p. 145, on Ps. cix. 66, "I have believed thy commandments."

I. What is implied in believing God's commandments?

1. That we are convinced of their reality and existence.
2. That we are persuaded of their excellency and perfection.
3. That we admit their perpetual authority.
4. That we have a holy dread of their sanctions.
5. That we rely on divine grace to fulfil them.

II. The necessity of this faith, Heb. xi. 6.

I shall give you but one more instance exactly of this kind, and that is from Mr. Simeon on Eph. vi. 10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

I. What is implied in the word?

1. That Christians have need of strength.
2. That they have no strength in themselves.
3. That there is enough in Christ Jesus, the Lord.

II. What is expressed in the text? "Be strong," &c. There are two things to which we are exhorted in these words.

1. To rely on Christ for strength, Col. i. 19; Eph. i. 22, 23; iv. 10; iii. 19; and iv. 7; John xiv. 1.
2. To do this with assured confidence, Gal. ii. 20; John i. 16; Isa. xlv. 24; 1 Sam. xvii. 45-47; Rom. viii. 31-39; Phil. iv. 13.

Now to such uses of implication there can lie no objections, because they are all of them, as far as I can perceive, very fairly represented: you cannot separate such ideas from the things really expressed; they are comprehended or involved in them, particularly as to the last outline. If Mr. Simeon had proceeded in his implications and said, 4thly, Such is the merit of our exertions that they will necessarily engage the divine interference in our behalf, he would have spread a net for our feet. Here is abuse.

It may here be remarked that, as some texts will admit a broader view than their literality expresses, so there are others that require narrowing before an illiterate congregation: as in law, if a rational interpretation can-

not be made out with regard to some case under discussion, reference is had to some general principles to collate and supply what is wanting, or to limit the sense. Some gracious and promissory expressions are found without any limitations or qualifications; they exhibit the general expressions of kindness without the exceptions and limitations which other passages of scripture, and indeed the general tenour of divine truth, would supply. There is *no good thing* that God will withhold from those that walk uprightly. "The Lord shall preserve thee from *all evil*." "Who is he that will *harm you* if you be followers of that which is good?" These general expressions may be limited by a division and its subdivisions, or in something like the following manner:—

I. Fix the true sense of the text.

II. Confirm it.

The scriptures do not anticipate every possible misconception of men; many things are expressed with a noble freedom, and are addressed to a healthful understanding, to considerate persons. "I speak as unto wise men; judge you what I say." So spoke St. Paul, and so speak the scriptures. They are not to be wrested from their proper sense; nor diminished or extended to the dishonour of God; nor made to square with the unreasonable expectations of those who, zealous to support a system of religion, come to the enquiry with prepossessed minds. Neither are the promises of God to be received but according to their legitimate application, which it will be your duty as ministers to point out, always remembering that scripture is the best interpreter of scripture.*

Secondly, I have to notice a more extended use of implication, or the greatest extension of it that can be, viz. to construct an entire discourse upon it. Of this I am about to give you instances from good authors. But I may be allowed to say "that great men are not always wise:" however, the matter must rest with the judgment of the preacher; if he adopt this method, he will no doubt devise some way of tendering a rational address to the audience, to whom, as well as to his Lord and Master, he is accountable.

My first reference is to Lavington, vol. ii., p. 365, Jer. xxii. 29: "O earth! earth! earth! hear the word of the Lord." The sermon was preached on a fast day, at Bideford, February, 1794, and is very eloquent.

This appeal has peculiar solemnity in it, and seems to imply,

I. That mankind in general are careless and inattentive to the word of the Lord. (Here he gives instances.)

II. It further implies the importance of the message, the word earth being three times repeated.

III. It carries with it an earnestness and importunity, as if their not hearing the word of the Lord might be attended with the utmost danger.

Such are the principal divisions, and skilfully they are filled up. I have just said that a wise preacher will take care to furnish a rational discourse. This Mr. Lavington has done, and he closes his discourse with an eloquent and pungent address to the people, suited to the occasion. You must always observe that, if the body of your discourse be any way defective, your exordium or peroration must be auxiliary.

* These remarks on the limitation of a sentence of scripture might perhaps be more properly introduced under the twenty-sixth Topic, "Define;" but the irregularity may be permitted in this instance, as it seems a timely memento when speaking of extensions. It is to be feared that too many professors greedily devour comfortable truths, which do not suit their present state, and which they ought at present to be denied.

President Davies fixes on something like the same plan; there is indeed a shade of difference, owing to the latter articles appearing somewhat propositional. See vol. i., p. 89, on John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. He observes that the text implies,

- I. That without Christ there is no salvation.
- II. That through Jesus Christ a way of salvation is opened.
- III. That the pre-requisite to this is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- IV. That by faith there can be no exclusion.
- V. That this constitution of the way of salvation is a most astonishing display of the divine love.

But we have another instance more to the point from the same excellent author, vol. iii., p. 66, on Mat. xxiii. 37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," &c.

- I. The text implies that sinners, while from under the protection of Christ, are in a situation of danger.
- II. That they may obtain safety by putting themselves under his protection.
- III. That he is willing to receive the greatest sinners under his protection.

Now, if these heads be followed up with a searching address founded upon the impending ruin consequent on their rejecting Christ, while he is calling them under his wing, without extensively noticing the precise words in a textual way, the effect, by a divine blessing, will be great. To make a whole discourse upon implied particulars may seem to be running to the verge of decorum, but there are some passages of scripture which could not be so well discussed in any other method. In the examples hitherto given, however, the texts might very well have been treated by the ordinary methods of textual division. The best is that of Mr. Lavington. Mr. Davies, though a preacher and writer of the very first class, does not discover that correctness of arrangement which our modern English preachers have attained. I think it very probable that in his age and remote situation from England, our examples were not before him. I very much question whether he ever heard of the Claudean system, or of Claude's great disciple, Blair, or many others of the moderns. The following, from Mr. Henry's Commentary, will show how important are the services to which the Topic may be applied. It is on a passage which expresses very little, and an ordinary mind would have passed it over almost without remark; but Mr. Henry, by looking at what was implied, has beautifully shown the value and importance of the promise it contains. The text is Zech. viii. 5: "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets." He observes that this intimates or implies,

- I. That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children; their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, Gen. i. 28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, *boys and girls*, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up.
- II. That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and cheerful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant playing age; let us not grudge it them; much good may it do them and no harm. "Evil days" will come time enough, and years of which they will say that they have "no pleasure in them," in consideration of which they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator.
- III. That they shall have great plenty, meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine we find the children "swooning as the wounded in the streets of the city," Lam. ii. 11, 12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing.
- IV. That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect

security. There shall be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters, "no complaining in the streets" (Ps. cxliv. 14); for, when there is playing in the street, it is a sign that there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so closely that they could not go in the streets (Lam. iv. 18), but now they shall play in the streets and fear no evil.

V. That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities that are divided into factions and parties the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly "playing in the streets;" not devouring, but diverting one another.

VI. That the sports and diversions used shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play than what they are willing that persons should see "in the streets;" no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of.

VII. That childish youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasing to see the "boys and girls playing in the streets," but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, who should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be sitting in the market place, crossing questions (Matt. xi. 16, 17), but it is no way fit that men who are able to work in the vineyard, should stand all the day idle there, Matt. xx. 3.

In conclusion, I beg leave to introduce a kind of *case converse* of Claude's; i. e. to consider what is *not* supposed, instead of what *is* supposed. If the preacher designs to draw his hearer's attention to one point, to excite their passions, or to produce conviction, this last method is admirably suited. We have an instance in Flechièr on the text, "Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Designing to rebuke *luxury in eating and drinking*, he says, "The rich man *does not* propose to employ his fortune in faction. He *does not* intend to increase his estate by encroaching on those of his neighbours, *nor* to get rich by extortion and usury. He *does not* mean to trouble and persecute good people who do not live as he does; nor does he design to give himself up to a sordid avarice, or to ostentation and pomp. No; he says, '*Soul, take thy ease*,' in luxury, that beastly, more than beastly, habit." It might seem trifling in so great a preacher as Flechièr to talk of what the rich man did *not* do; but this was an admirable and skilful preparation for a home stroke against the beastly habit of drunkenness and gluttony. Here was, indeed, a cutting comment. I also recollect several English examples of this rule. Beddome, on John xvii. 16, points out in what senses the text *is not true*. The same author, on Heb. x. 29, notices what sins are not included in the general expression of the text. We may also refer to Davies, vol. iii., p. 86, and to Blair, vol. iii., p. 6. The example from Flechièr might be considered as rhetorical only; but these latter ones are really necessary for the understanding of the text.

Blair says, on Acts xxiv. 16, "The text does not imply boasting of having attained to a conscience void of *every offence*; but Paul says that herein he *exercised* himself; this was his object and study; to this he formed and trained himself," &c. This is a just distinction.

LECTURE XIV.

TOPIC VI.

REFLECT ON THE PERSON SPEAKING OR ACTING.

HUMAN agencies open to us an extensive field of observation. Here the historian collects the chief materials of his labours; and the divine also cannot proceed far without contemplating the characters of those by whom

many things are said and done, as recorded in the holy scriptures. Sometimes indeed supernatural beings rise to his view, or descend from heaven, demanding attention; but commonly men like ourselves, in several ages of the world, have become so important as to demand our study. They have brought about great events on the theatre of the world, or within the narrower but the more valuable enclosure—the church, or they have contributed to the divine oracles, forming materials for the holy scriptures; and whatever were the things acted, or recorded, or said, something must be noted about the persons themselves; their characters are connected with their acts and sayings; and we cannot fully determine any thing without some investigation concerning them. Whether these several agents be pious or wicked, wise or unwise, whether they be chief actors or subordinate, whether they excite our veneration or suggest motives to caution, whether their example be salutary or dangerous, by what degree of authority they act or speak—these must be material points of our consideration.

Hence we perceive the value of our sixth Topic, “Reflect on the person speaking or acting,” to which I take the liberty of adding, *Reflect on the persons or characters spoken of*.*

The person or character named in the text has been already twice before us, namely, in the regular and in the interrogative divisions, which would seem to militate against our introducing it here. With these circumstances before us, how can we resume the subject? and how consider the Topic again? The answer is this: I think a fit opportunity here presents itself of going a few steps further into a beautiful province, hoping that no stern sentinel will forbid our approach. We will commit no depredations, enter into no disputes, nor lay claim to any thing which others call private property; we shall very soon make an exit as peaceable as our *entré*, and we are disposed to render a favourable report of whatever may fall under our observation. It may also be observed that the primary intention of this sixth Topic really opens a distinct source of observation, as it leads us to examine whether any observations may not be made on the person whose words or actions are recorded in our text which will tend to elucidate the text itself, or to furnish arguments for pressing the claims of duty drawn from the character of the person speaking or acting.

For example, let us again take the following text: “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” Here, 1. You may very pertinently remark that this precept is more beautiful in the mouth of St. Paul than it could have been in that of any other man. The reason is this: he, of all men in the world, had the greatest reason for resentment upon worldly principles; for never was there a man more persecuted, never a man more unjustly persecuted, than he; he was persecuted by his own countrymen the Jews, persecuted by the Gentiles, persecuted by false brethren, persecuted by false apostles, persecuted when he preached the Gospel, persecuted even by those for whose salvation he was labouring, persecuted to prison, to banishment, to bonds, to blood. How amiable, then, is such a precept in the mouth of such a man! How forcible is such a precept, supported by one of the greatest examples we can conceive, by the example of a man whose interest seemed to dictate quite a contrary practice! When we give such precepts to the

* If we do not include persons spoken of under the sixth Topic there is none of the Topics that will include them, which would be an evident defect.

worldly they never fail to say to us, "Yes, yes ; you talk finely ; you have never been insulted as we have ; had you met with what we have, you would talk otherwise." But there is no reason to say so to St. Paul, any more than to Jesus Christ, his Master, the author of this divine morality ; for who was ever so persecuted as Jesus Christ ? and, after him, who suffered more than his servant Paul ?

2. You may also very properly remark that, to take a different view of the apostle Paul, no man was more obliged to teach and love such a morality than himself. Why ? Because, of all those whom God, in his ineffable mercy, had called to the knowledge of the truth, he had been most concerned in cruel efforts of rage against God and his church. All inflamed with fury, he went from Jerusalem to Damascus to ravage the flock of Jesus Christ. In this raging violence of his hatred God made him feel his love, pardoned his sins, softened his heart, and from heaven cried to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?" Who, then, could be more obliged to preach mercy than this man, to whom God had shown so much mercy ? Might he not say, when he gave this rule of morality, what he said on another subject, "I have received of the Lord that which I deliver unto you : I have received the same mercy which I teach you." Add to this that the apostle had not only met with pardoning love to an enemy on God's part, but he had also experienced it from the *church*. Far from rendering him evil for evil, far from avenging his persecutions, the disciples of Christ reached out the arms of their love to him, received him into their communion, and numbered him with the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Such were Claude's views of the Topic, which requires no further illustration in its primary intention. My present design, however, is to offer some remarks on its more extended application, as opening a way to discourses on sacred biography. I am quite satisfied that this province has been neglected, though the soil is rich, and such as will abundantly repay the labour bestowed upon it. This neglect has not however been universal ; the late Dr. Hunter, the late Rev. Mr. Robinson of Leicester, Dr. Blair, and others, have been justly celebrated for their labours in this department ; but the neglect to which I allude is among the great body of preachers.* Or it may be that this has not been wholly neglect, for that is an offensive term, and sure I am that I would not willingly wound the feelings of any by uttering one word in deprecation of their well-meant efforts ; perhaps they have had too humble an opinion of their own talent, and, because it has so happened that great men chiefly have entered on this labour, they have imagined that it was only fit for such elevated characters. But I do not see why such a degree of diffidence should be entertained, or why any preacher, competent to the general duties of his office, may not enter into this distinct species of sermonizing with a prospect of success ; nay, I think some other species far more difficult of execution. I know that it requires a very sound and a discriminating judgment, as well as great knowledge of the heart ; but so do other kinds of discourse. This kind of preaching stands highly recommended. St. Paul, in his eleventh chapter to the

[* The preacher will derive much aid in this department from Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, the new edition of Dr. Kitto's Cyclopædia, and the works of Hughes, Williams, and Dr. Cox on the Women of Scripture. Dr. Eadie's Bible Dictionary contains some very valuable sketches. Coquerel's *Biographie Sacrée* in French is very valuable, but the author's rationalism is not always restrained.]

Hebrews, briefly but effectually restores to our notice the worthies of the Jewish history. We are reminded that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." Sacred biography is therefore a means of preserving the knowledge and memory of the best of mankind, their noble acts, their beneficial labours, their wise expressions. It is a means of immortalising their virtues, or of cautioning us by their frailties. It is giving a voice to those who, though dead, yet are willing to speak to us for our advantage. It is speaking on God's behalf, who made these men "burning and shining lights" in their generations. Who had the honour of their preservation amidst all the ills of life, and amidst all the persecutions they endured? and who at length brought them to glory? The answer need not be given. All kinds of hearers will be entertained and benefited by discourses upon this plan. Great men can obtain their examples only here; and all others can here obtain a just view of what they must aim at and follow after. Here emulation must begin; here action must be excited; and here reward must be exhibited to those who, imitating their faith and patience, shall inherit the promises. But, what is of very great consequence, ignorant or juvenile hearers can understand a life when they cannot fully comprehend a doctrine. The young who attend Sunday and other schools will direct their attention especially to the early lives of others of their young tribe, when nothing else would secure it.* I do therefore recommend to you, and all persons that are in the habit of addressing the young, to study the art of delineating scripture characters. I am very jealous of any other characters. I do not say we must not admit such, for instance, as are recorded in Janeway's Token for Children; but every account of character except the narratives of scripture is liable to error or partiality. Life-writers are too often like those artists who value their paintings by the quantity of showy colours they throw on the canvass. As to justness of proportions—light and shade—truth and reason—these, with such persons, are trifling considerations. But, as we look for the blessing of God upon what we say, we must bear truth on our lips, the exact truth, and nothing but the truth, upon the true scripture plan.

And here one can but take notice of the biographical articles in our religious periodical works. Lives by the score without a fault (at least subsequently to conversion), a constant flow of holy affections, ceaseless labour to do good, a fair light in the family, brilliant in the church—in short, nothing wanting martyrdom to place them in the highest rank of saints. These writers must suppose either that we have lost our understanding or that we never had any. Human nature is *semper eadem*, and this nature remains in the best till death, when all imperfections in the

* The cunning priests of the catholic church take great advantage of the disposition in their people to listen to the lives of their saints. I once heard one of their preaching priests recount the life of an eminent saint: he dwelt with rapture upon his sanctity, his seclusion from human society, his fastings, his penances and mortifications, his conflicts with the devil, his miracles, the days and nights he spent in prayer, and the vast stock of good works he had more than he had occasion for, which therefore remained to pass into the treasury of the church, for the use of those who had too few. I take this as an instance that there is something which delights in these recitals of the lives of eminent individuals of our species, especially if marvellous, and at some great distance of time; and, unless it be always correct that fiction pleases better than truth, I should hope that something like the same effects may be produced when the genuine characters of scripture are described.

good are done away for ever. It is highly proper to magnify divine grace by showing its influence on the character of any whom we may be called to notice ; but then our representations, to be effective and influential, should be proportioned to the actual measure of our experience ; they should so accord with facts as to correspond with the convictions of those who knew the man ; they should in fact be accurate and lively copies, in which the features of the original may be immediately brought before the eye of the mind. Hence it will sometimes be expedient to notice those inconsistencies and improprieties which may stand as blemishes in their character, and this not for the purpose of their disgrace, not to gratify their enemies, not to throw a suspicion upon their whole character, not to grieve their surviving friends, but that these blemishes, noticed in public and put upon record, may warn others not to do wrong in the same way, that our enemies may see we are just and impartial (for their eyes are open to these matters), and that the fearful and humble believer, or the afflicted penitent, may see that other Christians were encompassed with infirmities and liable to the same temptations as they themselves feel.

There are two ways of delineating character : the one is by commencing with a narration of facts, and then tracing these to the principles whence they may be supposed to originate. Our Saviour recommends this method of examination in the seventh of Matthew ; we are first to look at the fruit and thence to determine the quality of the tree. This method, however, requires very great caution. It is true there must be something bad in the heart when a bad action is done, and *vice versâ* ; but then as man is of a mixed character, neither wholly bad nor wholly good, and as at one moment the evil principle and at another the good may prevail, so the decision becomes embarrassing and requires care. It may be material to observe, in regard to our Saviour's discourse in the passage above mentioned, that the case alluded to is of an unequivocal nature. When a man's words and professions are fair, but his actions belie that profession, then we argue justly that the character is bad. So far our Saviour's rule has no difficulty in it. But where a character is not assumed to deceive, and there are appearances both favourable and unfavourable, then some other rule must be applied whereby actions are to be traced to their principle. The predominant character must be ascertained. If it be proved that a principle of divine grace really exists and operates—that the individual is really governed by a holy fear of God, evidenced by his reverence of God's name and institutions ; by love to God, evidenced by his delight in that which he has commanded (for this is the love of God, that we keep his commands), by his affection towards those who bear the divine image, by a decided separation from the world, and by some Christian graces that are peculiar to the divine life—then we determine that such a man's principles are radically good, and that whatever appears to the contrary is to be pronounced accidental only. The man has a right to be heard upon St. Paul's plea : "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." If this rule be not admitted, then there is not a Christian in the world ; but, if the rule be correct, the difficulty is removed ; and, whether we see the individual's repentance or not, it is fairly to be supposed, for a real Christian rests not till he repents and renews his faith in the atonement. Nay, even in the awful case of a backsliding professor bordering on apostacy, we are not to strip him of his righteousness till he become an enemy of that which is good ; for in all

cases short of this there is a corrective principle within him which in time will duly operate to his restoration, as in the instances of David, and Peter, and many others.

But, on the other hand, if we can see no scriptural marks of divine grace, no holy fear or love to God, no love to his people, no delight in divine things; then, though there may be some good actions, some occasional services and compliances—yet, in tracing actions to their principles we must with reluctance and caution, and with real sorrow, assign such favourable actions and observances to an occasional place only, and insist that the character itself is that of an unrenewed person, and indicates an unsafe state, but still having the benefits of the gospel as a plea, and the declared mercy of God pleadable, if ever they should be approached by a living faith—or, in other words, should God grant them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

The other method of delineating a character is to commence with the principles which the individual is supposed to possess, and to proceed from these to the several acts of life as flowing from them. Josiah's history commences with a declaration of early uprightness; and the sacred historian then exemplifies this character in his several acts of holy zeal for the glory of God. On the other hand it is asserted, at the beginning of Manasseh's history, that he was wicked, and his wickedness is subsequently evinced in the several indictments that are afterwards proved against him. This method is, in fact, proving an individual's "faith (or the want of it) by his works." Before closing this Lecture, I shall give a further illustration of this in the lives of Cain and Abel; and you may recollect that there is a similar case of Isaac and Ishmael.

This, however, is not the usual way, and I think it must give place to the former. Nevertheless, so long as the delineation is extensive, ample, and just, it is not material which of these two courses you follow, or whether you mark out a new track for yourselves. You will observe, by the examples I am about to give, that some divide upon the several qualities and excellences of the character, others upon the different states of life through which the individuals passed, or by some contrast of their principles and conduct. These modes, or any other that preserve the necessary order, may be adopted.

Our examples of sacred biography may appropriately commence with a sketch of the life of our ever-blessed Saviour. It is from Dr. Blair, and is founded on Acts x. 38: "Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good." After stating, by way of apology, that he does not intend to give a complete view of this holy life, he thus divides his subject:—

I. Attend to his assiduity and alacrity in embracing every opportunity of doing good. The whole history of his life is the history of active and diffusive benignity. Wherever he was present we find him employed in doing good, either relieving men from their distresses or making them wise and happy by his instructions. The whole country around him seemed to be his family, and, if in a literal sense he had been the father of them all, they could not have exercised his care nor shared his bounty more. The hungry were fed and the sick were cured, the blind saw and the lame walked, wherever he came. His miracles never were mere ostentations of power, but always expressions of goodness. Often he prevented the supplications of the distressed, and, unasked, conferred his favours; but never did any person apply to him for aid and relief without receiving it, whether he was Jew or heathen, friend or foe. What is especially remarkable in his beneficence is that it was continued and persevering in the midst of ingratitude. This is one of the hardest trials of virtue, not to be soured by

the perversity of men, and which persons even of generous spirits find it the most difficult to bear. But though Christ had to deal with a most untoward and stubborn generation, whom no evidence could convince and no goodness could mollify; though of all the great numbers who had been objects of his beneficence we read of few who thankfully acknowledged his kindness, fewer who became his followers, and none who rose up to assert his cause when borne down by unjust persecution; yet seeking to do good only for its own sake, he persevered to the last in unwearied beneficence. He *overcame evil with good*. It had been his principle, and, it would seem a noted saying of his, which his disciples remembered and quoted after his death, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35.

II. Mark for imitation the gentleness and affability which appeared in the whole of our Lord's conduct. This relates to the manner of conferring benefits, which is often as material as the benefits themselves are. These are sometimes conferred so ungraciously as to carry the air of insults rather than benefits; whereas, when they bear the marks of proceeding from real kindness, their value is heightened, and they are received with double pleasure. There are numberless occasions when the discoveries of humane temper, and the minor offices of obliging and courteous behaviour, contribute essentially to the happiness of others, and supply the place of greater benefits which it may not be in our power to bestow. For this amiable spirit our Lord was remarkably distinguished. He was open and affable to all, and easier of access than his own disciples. On different occasions we find him checking his disciples when they restrained the forwardness of the multitude who pressed upon him seeking relief. Nay, he rebuked them for forbidding little children to come to him, whom the fondness of the parents sought to introduce to his presence. He took the children into his arms and blessed them, and propounded them to his disciples as emblems of that innocence and simplicity which are requisite for our entering into the kingdom of heaven, Mark x. 14. He conversed familiarly with all sorts of people, and readily answered the questions they put to him. He had nothing of that haughty and distant reserve which we often see maintained by men of the world, and which prevents them from holding intercourse with any whom they consider as their inferiors in reputation or in rank. On the contrary, as our Lord was ready to do good to all, so he disdained not to receive kindness from others, complying cheerfully with the desire of those who invited him to their houses, and accepting in good part the proffered tokens of their well-intended respect. For such instances of courtesy, he was reproached by the Jews as one who wanted that external severity of manners which they imagined to belong to a professed reformer of the world. But he, who knew what was in the heart of man, saw that gentleness and condescension were more effectual methods of gaining men over to goodness than harshness and austerity, and therefore did not decline all conversation with men of doubtful or blemished lives, as long as there was any hope of making them better. It was indeed true that he was, as they reproached him, *a friend to publicans and sinners*; for he was a friend to every one to whom he could do good. At the same time, it is of importance to remark that this benignity of our Lord's manners never betrayed him into the opposite extreme, never degenerated into that easiness of good nature which too often leads men to slide into the manners and habits of those with whom they converse, though they cannot approve of them. Wherever the interests of virtue were concerned our Saviour was inflexibly firm. He boldly lifted up his voice, and testified against vice and corruption wherever he beheld them. He freely reprov'd the greatest men of the nation for their hypocritical and assumed shows of sanctity; and the civility with which he was entertained in the house of a Pharisee did not prevent him from inveighing severely against the vices of that sect in their own presence, Luke xi. 37.

III. Consider him as a faithful and affectionate friend. The apostles whom he chose for his intimate companions and friends were men of honest and candid minds, and of great plainness and simplicity of character; men who from real esteem, and from conviction of the truth of his mission, had become his followers, and who, notwithstanding the disadvantages of his fortune in the world, continued to follow him to the last. At the same time they had also great defects. They were most of them of timid and fearful disposition, of slow understanding, backward to apprehend spiritual things, and still prepossessed with the favourite prejudice of their nation, that the promised Messiah was to be a great conqueror, who was to rescue their country from foreign subjection and raise it to empire and grandeur. Among these men our Lord passed all the hours of his private life, acting every part of an affectionate and faithful friend; commending, advising, and reproofing with great sincerity, and at the same

time with great tenderness. In his manner of living he put himself perfectly on a level with them. Some of them he honoured with greater intimacy than others; but, like a prudent father in his family, he allowed none of them to affect superiority over the rest, and checked all that tended to rivalry among them. He never flattered them in their failings. He never soothed them with vain hopes. He never concealed the disagreeable consequences that would follow from adherence to his cause. Again and again he inculcated what they were backward and unwilling to believe concerning himself; and though the questions they put often discovered a degree of gross ignorance, he answered them all without passion or impatience, training them up by degrees to the events that were to happen after his decease, and to the high part they were destined then to act in the world. How happy would it be for mankind if more attention were given to this noble pattern of fidelity and complacency which ought to prevail among friends, and of the indulgence due to the failings of those who are, in their general character, worthy and estimable persons! This amiable indulgence he carried so far that in one of the most critical seasons of his life, during his agony in the garden, when he had left his disciples for a short time, with a strict charge to watch till he should return, but upon his returning found them asleep—all the reproof which their negligence at so important a juncture drew from him was no more than this: "What! could you not watch with me for one hour?" Matt. xxvi. 40. Of the tenderness of our Lord's affections, and the constancy of his friendship, we have a very memorable instance in that mixture of friendship and filial piety which he discovered during the cruelty of his last sufferings. It is recorded that when he hung upon the cross, beholding John his beloved disciple and Mary his mother standing as spectators below, he said to John, "Behold thy mother," and to Mary, "Behold thy son," thus committing his forlorn mother to the charge of his friend John, as the most sacred and honourable pledge he could leave him of their ancient friendship. The heart of his friend melted; and, from that hour, we are told, "he took her home with him to his own house." It is John himself who has recorded to us this honourable testimony of his Master's friendship, John xix. 26, 27.

IV. Notice his steady command of temper under provocation. Though he had revenge always in his power, he constantly declined it. On one occasion, when his disciples wished him to call down fire from heaven to punish the inhospitality of the Samaritans, "he turned and rebuked them, saying, You know not what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," Luke ix. 55. "When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not." The insults which he often received from a brutal multitude had no power to alter the meekness and generosity of his disposition: he continued to beseech and entreat them when they sought to chase him away from amongst them. When they accused him of being in confederacy with evil spirits he answered their injurious defamation only with mild and calm reasoning, that, if he by means of Satan did cast out Satan, his kingdom must be divided against itself, and could not stand. At his trial before the high priest, when he was most injuriously treated, and contrary to all law was, in the face of the court, struck by one of the high priest's officers, what could be spoken more meekly and reasonably than his return to this usage at a time when all circumstances concurred to exasperate the spirit of an innocent man—"If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but, if well, why smitest thou me?" John xviii. 27. When his enemies were completing the last scene of their cruelty in putting him to death, all their barbarous usage and scurrilous taunts on that occasion provoked not one revengeful thought in his breast, nor drew from his lips one unbecoming expression; but, on the contrary, the last accents of his expiring breath went forth in that affectionate prayer for their forgiveness—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

V. His sympathy and compassion for the miseries of mankind. It was not with a cold, unfeeling disposition that he performed the office of relieving the distressed. His manner of bestowing relief clearly showed with what sensibility he entered into the sorrows of others. How affecting, for instance, is the account of his restoring to life the son of the widow of Nain, as it is related in the beautiful simplicity of the evangelical historian! "When he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her." All the circumstances in this incident are moving and affecting; and it presently appeared with what tender sensibility our Lord was touched at the sight of so mournful a procession. "And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not; and he came and

touched the bier (and those that bore him stood still), and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother," Luke vii. 12—16. The whole scene of raising Lazarus from the grave, places our Saviour's sympathy in the strongest light, John xi. 33—36. In like manner when, for the last time, he was about to enter into Jerusalem, though the certain knowledge of all the cruelties which were prepared for him there would have filled the breast of any ordinary person with indignation and hatred, instead of such emotions, the foresight of the direful calamities which hung over that devoted city melted his heart. See Luke xiii. 34; xix. 42.

VI. His complete obedience to his heavenly Father's will as to the purport of his mission.

This last I have added, and you can add many others scarcely less important.

Take next a sketch or two from the Rev. Mr. Robinson's Scripture Characters: say that of Adam, Gen. v. 5: "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

- I. View his character in his state of rectitude.
 1. The extent of his knowledge.
 2. The truth of his holiness.
 3. The perfection of his happiness.
- II. After that rectitude was for ever lost.
 1. His awful fall.
 2. The consequences of this fall.
 3. The revelation made to him of a redeemer.
 4. His dissolution, according to the divine denunciation, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Again, take the lives of Cain and Abel together: adopt for a text Gen. iv. 3—5.

- I. The difference of their worship.
 1. Cain's offering was of a worldly character.
 2. Abel's had respect to a spiritual object, Heb. xi. 4.
- II. The difference of their conduct or moral character. The works of one were evil, those of the other righteous, 1 John iii. 12.
- III. The difference of their end.

This is somewhat like Mr. Simeon's on Gal. iv. 22—24. You may take another form of division, viz., upon the chief circumstances of a life, as that of Lot, Gen. xix. 20.

- I. Before he fixed his abode at Sodom, Gen. xii.
- II. During his residence there, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.
- III. His dismission from Sodom.
- IV. His permission to rest at Zoar.

You may take the life of David from Acts xiii. 36: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

I. Consider David in his historical character. [Then, in subdivisions, you take his descent, his early life, his call to the kingly office, the chief acts of his reign, his public worth, his private life, his imperfections, &c.]

II. Consider his eminence in the church. [Here notice his inspiration, his prophetic spirit, and his representative character as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, to which you will add whatever you may think suitable for that purpose.]

You might also take the character of Moses in the same manner, taking for a text Deut. xxxiv. 10: "There arose not a prophet like unto Moses," &c. Let the principal divisions be his official and his typical character. The materials for subdivisions I shall leave to your own selection. I hope that these forms, though not numerous, will yet be sufficient as examples of this kind of preaching, and shall close this Lecture with a few remarks.

The first character in this Lecture was that of our blessed Saviour. His character will very often present itself to your notice, and it opens to you such immense topics of observation and instruction that your studies should be intensely devoted to it. You should at all times be able to speak eloquently of Him whom all heaven adores, whom all nations desire so soon as they know his excellency, who is the chief of all the names that ever were named; therefore endeavour to qualify yourselves to speak loftily of him, say almost to inspiration.

My desire that you should excel in this style of preaching prompts me to point out some examples of excellence for your improvement. The examples of scripture are the purest. Characters are there drawn with inimitable skill, with such brevity and correctness, such unequalled impartiality, that they seem to live before our eyes. Of our own authors that would be serviceable to your studies I recommend Lawson on the Character of Joseph, Lawson on Ruth, Blair's Lives, interspersed in his five volumes of Sermons (these for elegance and accuracy stand very high in my esteem; his manner should be studied well), Bishop Horne's Life of John the Baptist, Dr. Adington's Life of St. Paul, the Rev. T. Robinson's Scripture Characters, Hunter's Sacred Biography, &c. From these and similar works you may catch the manner of this art; for it is peculiar and distinct from all other kinds of writings. You will learn from such sources, and from your own accurate observations, much of the philosophy of human nature, much of the mystery of the heart, its turnings and twinings, the secret springs that move the man, the motives of actions, his passions, affections, appetites, what is assignable to his folly and what to his wisdom, what to his education, his early impressions, his prejudices, or the real grace of God that he possesses. You will learn what is consistent or inconsistent with his character and station, and in what manner to turn all incidents into matter of instruction.

I am aware that it will be said, How can we penetrate the human heart, since this is the province of Omniscience? In many cases the scriptures determine for us. God has been graciously pleased himself to lead us into the "secret chambers," has given us his own decisions. The eleventh of Hebrews, for instance, decides respecting many characters concerning whom it would have been difficult for us to have decided. Again, very frequently, at the end of a life described, there is a key given us how to judge, as that respecting Moses, Deut. xxxiv. 10, or that of Ahab, "There was none like Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord." But the difficulty may not be wholly insurmountable even when we are without such unerring guides.

You must distinguish between such acts as are done after mature consideration and such as are done on the spur of the occasion. An artful character, if we have time to deliberate, will act the hypocrite; but take him on a sudden, before there is a moment's time to think, and his action will strongly partake of his real character. There may be deliberate villany and deliberate goodness. There was villany in Simeon and Levi's conduct, and that of a deliberate kind, Gen. xxxiv. There was deliberate obedience in Abraham offering up his son. In the one a pretended zeal for religion, in the other genuine devotedness to God. This is true in many cases, but not in all. It is rather sudden acts, done when and where there is no time to think, that speak the most plainly. The sudden emotion produced in Jeroboam's mind when the man of God prophesied against the altar in Bethel

(1 Kings xlii.) indicated the real character of that man ; but, if he had given himself time for reflection, he would certainly have acted a more cunning part. On the other hand, Joseph's situation in Potiphar's family, suddenly tempted by his mistress (Gen. xxxix.), discovered his principles. But this rule, like all others, is liable to exceptions ; for sometimes these sudden acts prove quite out of character. Saul's sudden penitence before David, and David's sudden temptation, were both out of character.

You are not in general to look so much at a man's public acts as to his private ones. Public acts may be dictated by goodness or by ostentation ; but, if any incident in a man's history appears when he supposed himself in private, there you behold the man. Achan's covetousness (Joshua vii.) was a secret act, and the act showed the evil state of his heart. But now turn to Nathanael (John i.) in secret under the fig-tree, and Jesus on the mountain's top at midnight, and there you see the evidence of excellence in their characters.

Further, if a man is good in an evil time, and bears insult or persecution patiently for not joining with the multitude, this is good evidence. Young Abijah in a corrupt court procured a high encomium ; but to be good, or seem so, when "goodness goes in silver slippers," does not appear to be so decisive.

Again, when youth are suddenly relieved of all restraints, by the death of parents or guardians, we directly see their characters. When persons change their situations, get totally from under the eye of their old connexions, and where all observation ceases, they then manifest their real characters. This was remarkably exemplified in the character of Jehoshaphat : he felt himself under restraint by the wise and pious Jehoiada, the high priest, to whom he owed the throne ; but on the death of this good man Jehoshaphat burst forth into his true character. See 2 Kings xi., xii., &c.

We are often indebted to afflictions and severe trials for the discovery of character, from the effects these produce during the season of trial, as well as the fruits subsequently brought forth. Great changes in a man's worldly circumstances generally tell a true tale, and new situations and connexions in general, such as marriages produce, sometimes give a sure mark of character. Candour will be disposed to urge an abatement in favour of the weaker sex ; but we must not carry this too far : we must not lower the standard of Christian character. Much is to be learned by knowing a person's predominant passion. For instance, if it be ambition, and the propensity to gratify it finds no other opening, he will try sometimes, like Jehu, to drive a religious horse, for a name above his neighbours. If naturally proud, if he can get no other coat, he will exhibit himself in the garb of sanctity ; if avaricious, he will turn religion to good account ; and so on for every other passion. On the contrary, if a man's religion evidently counteracts his natural passion, and gains considerably over it, here is a fine topic of observation.

If a man be naturally of a selfish disposition and of a narrow mind, and remain so after he assumes a profession of religion, it is an evil token ; but if you ascertain that his disposition was naturally selfish, but that his religion corrects this principle, so that "the churl becomes liberal," here the good seed is visible. If we discover that a man is naturally of an uncontrollable spirit—a self-willed being—and his religion does not mend him, we can give no favourable report ; but if the man becomes governable, and exercises

much self-denial, we shall report favourably, and with very much pleasure. If a man be naturally a wit, and continue so—never happy but in sporting witticisms, even in religious matters—the case is very doubtful. Foolish jesting is not only indecorous and improper, but the very first principle of religion “the fear of God,” most peremptorily forbids it. I never knew but one religious wit that could be called pious.

These hints will here be sufficient; you may in this manner run through every thing in human nature. Wherever you see the “old man put off” and the “new man put on,” or see the new man in tattered clothes, you may take your aim accordingly; but in general lean to the favourable side. “Charity thinketh no evil.” We are yet in the body, and if we do not take great care, somebody may give an unfavourable account of us. But there is one thing you must never forget, viz., to point out and to make reflections on those divine providences that control all events in a saint’s life (Ps. xxxvii. 23), to mark the sufficiency of grace in these holy men of God in every view and under all circumstances, and observe God’s faithfulness to all his engagements to them: and you may take notice that the character, faith, and sentiments of ancient sins seem as really and effectually to have been founded on Christian doctrines as if the gospel in its largest letter had been published from the fall of man, and that they as well as we, received out of the same “fulness” of grace (1 Cor. x., Heb. xi., Rom. iv.), and that they, as well as ourselves, were divinely taught in all things necessary to life and godliness. Such views as these will open a large field of observation on different parts of the Christian system, will give great diversity to your matter, and produce a rich variety in your discourses.

Moreover, in regard to wicked characters, you may notice God’s dealings with them, the divine rebukes, warnings, etc., given them; and you may further notice the influence of bad company, evil counsellors, and vile passions, that lead from one degree of sin to another, till destruction comes upon them.

I have thus offered you many general ideas as to the delineation of character; something is yet due as to the manner in which you should make use of them. You will establish upon these ideas a system of *observation* and *comment*. This you will acquire by studying the works I have recommended better than by any thing I can bring before you; but, lest you should not be able to peruse such works (for this is very possible), I will attempt a few hints in conclusion of this Lecture. I have read biography, so called, which has been most dreadfully insipid, a species of elegant nothingness, poor thoughts in gaudy dress, occupying page after page, supplanting the attention of the reader, putting one in mind of the mountain in labour. Insipidity here is not to be endured; there must be a little salt, a little spice, and a little acid (but not of malice or envy), a great deal of sweet urbanity, and of truth *quantum sufficit*, for without this the rest of the ingredients will be of no value. “As you would that men should do to you, do you also so to them.” Turn your idea or incident over on every side; exercise a little patience and new thoughts will appear and old ones magnify to your view. And having said thus much it might be prudent in me not to write biography, though I recommend it to others; but if I were to write, the subject that would please me the best would be that of the diligent student and faithful pastor, who, while living, aimed at nothing but the glory of God and the benefit of his fellow-men.

Judicious observations, combined with comment, will be, if spirited and animated, sufficient to carry you through any service of this kind. Your outline or skeleton will of course comprehend the broad characters of the life you are speaking of; your subdivisions will make up the minor incidents or circumstances: each of these becomes, one after another, a subject to you, long or short, according to its importance.

Suppose the life of Joseph to be before you, or that part of it which is included in Gen. xlvii. 2, 3, "And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers," you might observe,

This was, perhaps, the first time that any of Joseph's brethren ever appeared in the presence of so great a king; for none of the princes of Canaan could be compared, for power and grandeur, with the king of Egypt. These men would doubtless feel no little solicitude when they were to appear before so august a personage as petitioners for his favour. But it was their comfort that they were introduced into the royal presence by a brother who loved them, and who was beloved and esteemed by the king; and may we not be emboldened to come into the presence of the everlasting King by the consideration that our blessed Mediator is not ashamed to call us brethren, and that his interest in the court of heaven is sufficient to procure us every thing we need? His merits more than counterbalance our unworthiness, and his intercession will procure for us the audience of all our prayers.

Again, Pharaoh said, "What is your occupation?" Pharaoh did not ask whether they had an occupation. This he took for granted. But he asked them what their occupation was. He wished to afford them some occupation or employment for which they were qualified by their former habits of life. A wise man will not rashly relinquish that occupation in which his employment has long been, nor will he rashly take another man out of that employment to which he has long been accustomed. As we are to make the first choice of our occupation, by considering the talents which God has given us, if we find ourselves called upon to choose a new employment it will be our wisdom to choose (if we are at liberty to choose) some business for which we are in a measure fitted by our former habits of life. *God has however often called men to professions very different from their former ones*; but then he can give what new powers he pleases to them in such cases. It is easy with him to make shepherds fit to rule over men, or to qualify fishers of the inhabitants of the waters to be fishers of men. God could give Joseph wisdom sufficient for the government of a great kingdom; but Pharaoh could not qualify men whose trade had been in cattle from their youth to manage his affairs of state."—*Lawson's Joseph*.

Here every thing is sensible and judicious; the author views things with the eye of a philosopher and the mind of a Christian minister. The words in italics bring home the subject to yourselves, as being about to become preachers; if God call you to this, he can and will qualify you for the work; and, if this be not the case, it were best to continue in your own occupations.

The following is of a more critical nature, and will afford variety. It is upon the eleventh chapter of John.

The subject is deeply affecting, and suited to the pen of John. The beloved disciple seems to delight in spreading it out; for he has coloured his narration with many beautiful circumstances, which unfold the characters of several persons, and manifest his intimate acquaintance with his Master's heart. It is a striking instance of that strict propriety which pervades all the books of the New Testament, and which marks their authenticity, that the tenderest scenes in our Lord's life, those in which the warmth of his private affections is conspicuous, are recorded by this evangelist. From the others we learn his public life, the grace, the condescension, the benevolence, which appeared in all his intercourse with those that had access to him. It was reserved to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to present to succeeding ages this divine person in his family and among his friends. In his gospel we see Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the last supper that he ate with them. It is John, the disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus while he sat at meat, who relates the long discourse in which,

with the most delicate sensibility for their condition, he soothes the troubled hearts of his disciples, spares their feelings while he tells them the truth, and gives them his parting blessing. It is John, whom Jesus judged worthy of the charge, who records the filial piety with which, in the hour of his agony, he provides for the comfort of his mother; and it is John, whose soul was congenial to that of his Master (tender, affectionate, and feeling like his), who dwells upon all the particulars of the resurrection of Lazarus, brings forward to our view the sympathy and attention with which Jesus took part in the sorrows of those whom he loved, thus making us intimately acquainted with them and with him, and presenting us with a picture at once delightful and instructive.

Having given the character of the historian, we must next show the friendship which Jesus entertained for the family of Lazarus. Bethany was a small village upon the Mount of Olives, within two miles of Jerusalem. Jesus, who resided chiefly in Galilee, and went only occasionally to Jerusalem, was accustomed to lodge with Lazarus on his way to the public festivals; and we are led to suppose, by an incidental expression in Luke (ch. xxi. 37, 38), that during the festivals he went out to Bethany in the evening and returned to Jerusalem in the morning. To this little family he retired from the fatigues of his busy life, from the disputations of the Jewish doctors, and the bitterness of his enemies; and, being like his brethren encompassed with infirmities, like his brethren also he found refreshment to his soul in the intercourse of those whom he loved. "Now Jesus," says John, "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." He loved the world; he loved the chief of sinners: that was a love of pity, the compassion which a superior being feels for the wretched. This was the love of kindness, the complacency which kindred spirits take in the society of one another. Of the brother he says to his apostles, with the same cordiality with which you would speak of one like yourselves, "our friend Lazarus." And, though we shall find the character of the two sisters widely different, yet he discerned in both a mind worthy of his friendship.

It appears strange to me that any person who ever read this chapter can blame the gospel, as some deistical writers have done, for not recommending private friendship. Can there be a stronger recommendation than this picture of the author of the gospel, drawn by the hand of the beloved disciple? When you follow Jesus to Jerusalem you may learn from his public life fortitude, diligence, wisdom. When you retire with him to Bethany you may learn tenderness, confidence, and fellow-feeling with those whom you choose as your friends. The servants of Jesus may not, in every situation, find persons so worthy of their friendship as this family; and there is neither duty nor satisfaction in making an improper choice. Many circumstances may appoint for individuals days of solitude, and therefore the religion of Jesus, which is universal, has wisely refrained from delivering a precept which it may be often impossible to obey. But those who are able to follow the example of their Master, by having a heart formed for friendship and by meeting with those who are worthy of it, have found the medicine of life. Their happiness is independent of noise, and dissipation and show. Amidst the tumult of the world, their spirits enter into rest; and in the quiet, pleasing, rational intercourse of Bethany, they forget the strife of Jerusalem.

The next object in this exhibition is the character of the two sisters, painted in the perfect and natural manner which the scriptures almost always adopt—by actions, not by words. As soon as Lazarus is sick the two sisters send a message to Jesus, with entire confidence in his power to heal and his willingness to come. He was now at a distance, but the sisters of Lazarus knew too well his affection for their brother to think that distance would prevent his coming. They say no more than "he whom thou lovest is sick" and they leave Jesus to interpret their wish. When Jesus arrives at Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, the different characters of the two sisters are supported with the most delicate discrimination, even under the pressure of grief, which, in the hand of a coarse painter, would have obliterated every distinguishing feature. Martha, who had been "cumbered with much serving" when she had to entertain our Lord, rises with the same officious zeal from the ground where she was sitting, dishevelled, in sackcloth, among the friends that had come to comfort her. She rises the moment she hears, by some accident, that Jesus is at hand, and runs to meet him. Mary, who had sat at the feet of Jesus, so much engaged with his discourse as not to think of providing for his entertainment, is incapable of so brisk an exertion, or thinks it more respectful to Jesus to wait his coming. This difference in the conduct of the two sisters is in the style of nature, according to which the particular feelings of particular persons give a very great variety to the language of passion, upon occasions equally interesting to all of them. A man may know—he ought to

know—every corner of his own heart, how far any part of his conduct proceeds from the defect of good or the prevalence of wrong principles. But the most intimate acquaintance does not give him access to know all the notions of delicacy and propriety which may restrain or urge on others at particular seasons, and may give to their conduct, in the eye of careless observers, a very different colour from that which they would wish; and it argues both an uncandid spirit and very little knowledge of the world to say or think, "This man does not feel as he ought," because he does not express his feelings as I would express mine. "Martha ran and met Jesus." "Mary sat still in the house." When Martha comes to Jesus there is in her first words a mixture of reproach for his delay and of confidence in his kindness: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." A gleam of hope, indeed, shoots athwart the sorrowful mind of Martha at the sight of Jesus. But her wish is so great that she is afraid to mention it: "I know that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She had conceived a hope (in the state of her mind it was a wild hope) that her brother whom she had lost might be instantly restored. Jesus composes her spirits, prepares her for this gift by recalling her thoughts from the general resurrection to himself, and probably gives her some sign or direction in consequence of which she goes to the house, and without alarming the Jews who were assembled there, says secretly to her sister, "The Master has come, and calleth for thee." This message instantly rouses Mary. Her spirit, bowed down with grief, revives at his call, and without knowing, and probably without conceiving, the purpose for which he called her, she arises quickly and goes to him. When she arrives there is more submission in her manner than there had been in that of Martha. The marks are stronger of an oppressed and afflicted spirit,—*"She fell down at Jesus's feet, weeping."* But, as if to remind us that we should look beyond these outward expressions, which, being very much a matter of constitution, vary accordingly in different persons, the evangelist puts the same words into the mouth of both: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and, whatever interpretation we give to these words when they are spoken by one sister, we cannot avoid giving them the same when spoken by the other. In this exhibition of the manner of the two sisters there is so much of nature, and of nature appearing strongly in minute circumstances, as to be far superior to that truth of painting which we admire in a fancied picture, and to carry with it an internal evidence that John was a witness of what he describes, and that his drawing is part of a scene which, from the powerful yet different emotions of the two sisters, had made a deep impression upon his feeling heart.

The next object which presents itself in this moral exhibition is the character of the apostles. The gospel presents us with their most natural picture—their doubts, their fears, their slowness to believe. By circumstances that seem to be incidentally recorded we see them feeling and acting, not indeed in the manner which would have occurred to a rude, unskilful hand, had he attempted to portray those who were honoured with being the companions of Jesus, but in the manner which any one intimately acquainted with the human heart will perceive to be the most natural for men of their condition and education, and situated as they were. We see them differing from one another in sentiment and conduct, with the same kind of variety which is observable among our neighbours and companions, each preserving in every situation his peculiar character, and all at the same time uniting in attachment to their Master.

Although the companions of Jesus were interested in the fate of his friend Lazarus, yet they did not understand the hints which our Lord gave them. Although sleep is one of the most common images of death, they supposed, when Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," that he was enjoying a refreshing sleep, by which nature was to work its cure; and, not attending to the impropriety of Jesus going a long way to awake him out of such a sleep, they said, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well." When Jesus tells them plainly, "Lazarus is dead," Thomas stands forth, and by one expression presents the same character as more fully unfolded elsewhere, John xx. 24—28. The disciples were alarmed at the danger of going back to Judea. They tried to dissuade their Master, but they found him fixed in his purpose: "Lazarus is dead; nevertheless, let us go unto him." Then said Thomas unto his fellow disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him." You see here the same warmth of temper, the same determined mind, which appeared on the occasion before referred to, but you see also the same defect of faith. Thomas did not think it possible that Jesus could shelter himself from the Jews. He did not see any purpose that could be served by the journey. He thought Jesus was going to throw away his life; yet he resolved himself, and he encourages his fellow-disciples, not to part with him:

"Let us go that we may die with him." It was the strong effort of a mind which loved and venerated Jesus, yet distrusted and did not know his divine power—Thomas faithless, yet affectionate and manly.

Such is the mixture of character which we often meet with in common life. Those who are most intimately acquainted with the workings of the human heart, and who have observed most accurately the manners of those around them, will best perceive the truth of that picture which the evangelists have drawn of themselves, and they will be struck with the force of that internal evidence for the gospel which arises from this simple natural record. We cannot attend to this picture without recollecting the divine power, which, out of these feeble, doubting men, raised the most successful instruments of spreading the religion of Jesus. There was no want of faith after the day of Pentecost. Thomas was one of the company assembled when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost;" and he who now says, "Let us go and die with Jesus," with power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord: Acts iv. 31—33.

The principal object in this moral exhibition yet remains; it is Jesus himself. The striking feature throughout the whole is tenderness and love. But we discern also prudence, fortitude, and dignity; and this chapter may thus serve as a specimen of that most perfect and difficult character which the apostles were incapable of conceiving, and which, had they conceived it, they would have been unable to support in every situation with such exact propriety if they had not drawn it from the life.

After he received the message from the sisters he relieved himself from the importunity of his disciples by an assurance which was sufficient to remove their anxiety, and he lingered for two days in the place where he was. But this lingering did not proceed from indifference. Mark how beautifully the fifth verse is thrown in between the assurance given to the disciples and the resolution to delay. He entered into their sorrows. His sympathy for them indeed yields to his prosecution of the great purpose for which he came; yet his love is not the less for delay. How tender and how soothing! The merciful High Priest, to whom Christians still send their requests, is not forgetful, although he does not immediately grant them. He loves and pities his own; but he does not think their time always the best. His own time for showing favour is set. No intervening circumstances can prevent its coming; and when it arrives they themselves will acknowledge that it has been well chosen, and all their sorrows will be forgotten and overpaid by the joy which will be brought to their souls. One of the finest moral lessons is conveyed by this delay of Jesus. It is pleasing to act from kindness, compassion, and love; but the excess of good affections may sometimes mislead us. And there are considerations of prudence, of fidelity, and justice, which may give to the conduct of the most tender-hearted man an appearance of coldness and severity. The world may judge hastily in such instances. But let every man be satisfied in his own mind, first, that he has good affections, and, next, that the considerations which sometimes restrain the exercise of them are such that he need not be ashamed of their influence.

It is strongly marked, in this moral picture, that the delay of Jesus, although dictated by prudence, did not proceed from any consideration of his personal safety. For, when the disciples represented the danger of re-visiting Judea, his answer was, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." His meaning is explained by other similar expressions. The Jews divided the day both in summer and winter into twelve hours, so that an hour with them was not, as with us, a certain portion of time, but the twelfth part of a day, longer in summer and shorter in winter. The time of his life upon earth was the day of Jesus, during which he had to finish the work given him to do. While this day continued none of his enemies had power to take away his life, and he had nothing to fear in fulfilling the commandment of God. When this day ended his work ended also; he fell into the hands of his enemies, but he was ready to be offered up. And thus in the same picture Jesus is exhibited as gentle, feeling compassion to his friends, undaunted in the face of his enemies, assiduous and fearless in working the work of him that sent him. There shines throughout the whole of this picture a dignity of manner—no indecent haste, no distrust of his own power, a delay which rendered one work more difficult, yet which is not employed in preparing for an uncommon exertion. "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that you may believe." He wishes to give his disciples a more striking manifestation of his divine power, and the display is made for their sakes, and not for his own. With what solemnity he displays to Martha his

exalted character in these words: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die!" And suitable to the authority implied in that character does he require from Martha a confession of her faith in him. Yet how easily does he descend from this dignity to mingle his tears with those of his friends! "When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in his spirit and was troubled;" and, as they led him to the sepulchre, "Jesus wept." How amiable a picture of the Saviour of the world! He found upon earth an hospital full of the sound of lamentation, a dormitory in which some are every day falling asleep, and those that remain are mourning over those who to them are not. He brought a cordial to revive our spirits, while we are bearing our portion of this general sorrow, and he has opened to our view a land of rest. But even while he is executing his gracious purpose his heart is melted with the sight of that distress which he came to relieve; and, although he was able to destroy the king of terrors, he was troubled when he beheld in the company of mourners a monument of his power. We do not read that Jesus ever shed tears for his own sufferings. When he was going to the cross he turned round and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." But he wept over Jerusalem when he thought of the destruction that was coming upon it (Luke xxiii. 28); and here the anguish of his friends draws from him groans and tears. He was soon to remove their anguish; but it was not the less bitter during its continuance, and it is the present distress of his friends into which his heart enters so readily.

Let the false pride of philosophy place the perfection of the human character in an equality of mind unmoved by the events that befall ourselves or others. But Christians may learn, from the example of him who was made like his brethren, that the variety in the events of life was intended by the Author of nature as an exercise of feeling, that it is no part of our duty to harden our heart against the impressions which they make, and that we need not be ashamed of expressing what we feel. God, who chastens his children, loves a heart which is tender before him; and Jesus, who wept himself, commands us to "weep with those that weep." The tears shed are both a tribute to the dead and an amiable display of the heart of the living, and they interest every spectator in the persons from whom they flow.

Thus we have seen, in this moral picture of the character of Jesus, tenderness, compassion, prudence, fortitude, dignity—"Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," (1 Cor. i. 24), the strength of an almighty arm displayed by a man, like his brethren, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14. The assemblage of qualities is so uncommon, and the harmony with which they are blended so entire, that they convey to every intelligent reader an impression of the divinity of our religion; and we cannot contemplate this picture without feeling the sentiment which was afterwards expressed by the centurion who stood over against the cross of Jesus, "Truly this was the Son of God."*—*Hill's Lectures on Divinity*, vol. i., p. 106—119. *On the Evidences of Christianity*.

We see in this account the delicate hand of a master, a nice inspection of human nature, a most accurate discrimination of character, and we cannot rise from the perusal without improved thoughts of the blessed Redeemer, and a much clearer view of the history of Lazarus than we ever had before.

The student will review these specimens of biography with great advantage, and I hope his skill in this line of his duty will be much improved.

Whenever the New Testament makes mention of an Old Testament character respecting which you are studying, this must always be noticed with great exactness. Cruden's Concordance of proper names will direct you to every passage where the name occurs. Thus, with regard to Joseph—the character treated of by Lawson—you will find him six times mentioned in the New Testament, besides a great number of times in the Old. This is a great assistance, especially if other helps are not at hand; and I cannot but hope that this subject will command a very high regard from the rising ministry. The experiment need only be tried to be successful.

* This quotation may be considered as a specimen of the *descriptive*, and should be read in connection with the Lecture on the third Topic.

TOPIC VII.

THE STATE OF THE PERSONS SPEAKING OR ACTING.

The holy prophets and other inspired teachers of mankind were manifestly a peculiar order of men, chosen of God and precious. As the messengers of heaven, through whom Jehovah has condescended to reveal his will, they possess strong claims to our regard ; and, as men who themselves lived under the full influence of those truths which they declared to have so important a bearing on our present happiness and future destiny, every thing connected with their state in this world must be highly interesting and instructive. The circumstances connected with their history have therefore been justly considered as furnishing valuable materials for observation. The historians of the world have incidentally recorded their sufferings and their worth ; and the church has in every period, subsequent to the termination of their earthly pilgrimage, cherished their names, and had them in affectionate remembrance. Judea, the favoured spot of their birth, and the scene of their labours and their trials, has been visited by the pious and the curious from the remotest regions of the earth ; and memorials are yet to be seen scattered up and down Judea to immortalize the places where prophets spoke, were apostles laboured, where martyrs sealed their testimony with their blood, and where Jesus, the "man of sorrows," yet "the Lord of glory," hung on the cross and expired praying for his enemies.

The Topic upon which we now enter, as well as the Sixth Topic (in which indeed this Seventh Topic might have been included), affords us an opportunity of contributing to perpetuate their remembrance. From their state in this world, we may not only derive many valuable lessons to ourselves, as their humble successors in the office of instructors, but also much that will assist us in the illustration of their writings, which is the point to be particularly noticed as falling within the province of this Topic. In their state, under all its peculiarities, we see the finger of God, not only as it was made to work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," but also as it is adapted to give weight to the instructions handed down to us, and to furnish the fairest "examples of suffering and patience," as well as of uprightness and sanctity. If these holy men had lived in ease and affluence, we should have had only the history of their untried obedience : they would have been no examples of patience, and would have been unskilful in the office of consolation. They could not have "comforted others with the comforts wherewith they themselves were comforted of God," nor have wept with those that wept. They could not have been touched with the feeling of human infirmities, nor have exhibited in their own persons the proofs of God's supporting power and of his faithfulness in keeping them. The greatest value of their character would have been lost as to us, and we should have been without a compass to steer by in the storms of life. But now their history is precious ; we read similar circumstances in their lives to those which we daily experience ; and we have an interest in this their suffering state in some respects resembling that which we have in the sufferings of the Saviour himself, who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," that he might be "a compassionate high priest." We are now satisfied that suffering with holy prophets and apostles, being in community

with them in sorrow, we shall also be in community with them in glory. We are satisfied that if we suffer for righteousness' sake, as they suffered, we shall be crowned with them; we are satisfied, by the marks they have left us, that we are legitimate followers of those who through faith and patience now inherit the promises.

This is no new or strange idea. The heroes of antiquity in the heathen page have always been exhibited as patterns of greatness, by their trials, by their fortitude, and their perseverance, more than by their valour, or their wisdom, or their high birth. The ancients thought that tried and suffering virtue was the most valuable of all virtue. They extolled and even idolized those benefactors of their country who had fallen a sacrifice to popular fury or died in wretched exile; and to have suppressed these examples would in their estimation have been infamous, as it would have been the common loss of mankind. So also if our great prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, had suffered nothing, I had almost said they would have taught nothing. Their instructions would only have been like those of secluded or pampered teachers, that knew nothing of the practical part of holy living. Comparatively useless would have been the doctrines of redemption to us had they not been delivered to us by men like ourselves, having themselves experienced the regenerating grace pointed out in these doctrines; but now one of the apostles, in the name of the rest, and for himself, says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that declare we unto you." It is as necessary to know a thing in its practical effects as in its doctrines; and thus the doctrines of consolation must be sanctioned by the state of the teacher being in unison with them.

The difficulties which these great forerunners had to contend with, and to overcome, suggested the denomination of "conquerors," who "overcame through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." They learnt their spiritual warfare under Jesus, "the captain of their salvation." They wrote the history of this warfare in the field of battle; and we read their state, as well as the matter of their writings, in its most legible characters. Blessed be God that their state was such as is represented; for this gives an authority to their writings more sure than any other testimony. When James says, "Take the prophets who have spoken to you in the name of the Lord for examples of suffering affliction and of patience," it is like a voice from heaven, and as full of evidence as that which shook Sinai's mount of ancient story. When Paul addressed Felix with the chain upon his hand, and the tyrant's sword over his head, his speech had infinitely more of authority than if he had addressed an epistle to Felix while he himself was in a place of safety. When Paul, writing to the Philippians in a prison at Rome, says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am there-with to be content" (Phil. iv. 11), the declaration challenges our immediate belief. Unlike the fine moral notions of Epictetus, dished up from the study for his waiting disciples, the apostle himself, in his own person, becomes the practical interpreter of his doctrine; and the obligation to exercise contentment is more powerfully impressed upon our heart by his example than it could be by any authoritative precept or by any train of reasoning. That which is observable in the apostles is also observable in the practice of some of the primitive Christians; and this is a proof of the effect of Paul's preaching. This was seen in the Macedonian Christians,

who were liberal towards the poor saints at Jerusalem (then suffering under famine) in a "great trial of affliction, and in their deep poverty."

A great part of the instructions contained in scripture manifestly grew out of the state of the holy penmen and the state of things surrounding them ; and, this being the case, there must be such a connexion between the one and the other as must render the facts of scripture the best illustrations of its doctrines. This connexion God has been pleased in his wisdom to establish. The truths which he would have us to believe he might have handed down to us as he did the ten commandments upon the mount ; but he designed that many of them should grow out of such a state of his favoured servants, and of things around them, as gave them their great brilliancy.

Here, however, an important enquiry arises, Is it requisite that the state of God's ministers and teachers should now be any way in unison with that of the prophets, and apostles, and primitive teachers, in order to give weight to modern sermons? or has the necessity of this ceased with the close of the scripture canon? Perhaps we must concede that this necessity has ceased in part—the end is attained, and we can now add no new authority to the word of God. But still the fitness of things has not ceased ; the adaptation of a course of means to its end must in every age be the same ; while man is man he will be moved and influenced as in former times. Even now the moral character of the speaker, and the state in which we find him, must go very far to convince the people. If he be holy in his life, and his state be such as to draw forth the exercise of those graces and virtues which no other character and state could draw forth, then an important point is established even for our present time. If he live the life he recommends, if he experience the things which he prompts the people to endure, and if he contend daily with the difficulties he excites them to contend with, surely this will give a weight to the admonitions of the preacher which must commend them to the consciences of his hearers. And here the preacher and his state are a public benefit. All casuistic and experimental divinity must rest on this view of things, upon bonds, and sympathies, and affections, belonging to our common nature ; and here the preacher pours forth his own heart to his hearers, and shows them "all that is in their hearts." And this cannot be charged upon him as the result of enthusiastic feelings, since it is only a copy or counterpart of what holy prophets and apostles experienced and expressed in the days of their pilgrimage ; and, in denying one, the other must be denied also.

Again it may be asked, Is it absolutely necessary that every preacher at the outset should be a man of rich and varied experience? Are we to exclude every other from the pulpit? I think not, for then we must exclude our young Timothies. Preachers can acquire this fulness of experience only by the experience itself, which time alone can supply. Young Timothy must preach under the direction of aged Paul, who is to instruct him "how he is to behave himself in the house of God," and in what manner "he must exhort with all long-suffering." Young and inexperienced preachers (being converted characters) must preach under the direction of the word of God, and the advice of the aged. Such preachers may for a time declare the sentence of God against sin, may preach "Christ and him crucified," may expound scripture, treat of moral obligation, of the character of God, &c., and what they want in experience may be compensated by zeal and

hard labour. These young men will in time, if spared, become fathers in the church. These are the young plants that are hereafter to become "trees of righteousness," when their fair and beautiful blossoms shall be succeeded by the expected fruit, and their fruit attain maturity and ripeness. We are not "to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," nor discourage rising talents. We must be thankful for the "dew of their youth," we must encourage them to "go forth in the strength of the Lord," and we must counsel the people not "to despise their youth, but rather do them service."

Such a state of rich experience is however necessary to a complete preacher of the gospel. Those will be the only efficient counsellors of the church, and the only true sons of consolation, who have been themselves tried and tempted; for they only can meet the difficulties of such as are tried, or even fully feel for them. Those only can preach with "all authority" who have themselves completely submitted to discipline; they only can preach to the aged, the infirm, the "afflicted and tossed with tempests;" they are best fitted to "strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees;" they are the fittest defenders of "the faith once delivered to the saints;" and they are the most perfect patterns that our age can furnish of what prophets and apostles were to the times in which they lived.

Whether these men be properly and decently provided for by the church, and live in that respectability to which they are entitled; or whether they be poor from neglect, nay, very poor, even to the extremest case, they will certainly be had in everlasting remembrance, and ought to be highly esteemed for their work's sake. It is very likely indeed that they will not be so respected by the world—even the religious world is not spiritual enough to know their value—while many will judge that because they are poor therefore they must be worthless; but such despised persons may take this comfort, that the best of men have always been overlooked by the carnal and the proud—though perhaps in the day of their calamity they may see their error, and may desire to die the death of such men. Jesus himself "was despised and rejected of men."

From these observations upon the Topic you will, I trust, derive matter for meditation and improvement; you will see the wisdom of God in so adapting the state of the holy penmen to the nature of their duty as therein to give us a lesson of instruction of great importance; you will see that no other state could have been so suitable, and you will reflect on your own state, and examine what similarity is discoverable.*

The use of this Topic in preaching is principally to suggest observations, either adapted to give strength and force to any precept, admonition, reproof, &c., or to illustrate some part of the subject. Thus, in explaining the passage, 1 Thes. v. 16, "Rejoice evermore," you must not fail to consider the state of St. Paul when he wrote his epistle to the church at Thessalonica. He was at that time at Athens, engaged in that superstitious city where, according to Acts xvii. 16, his "spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given up to idolatry." Here he was treated as "a babbler, a setter forth of strange gods;" in short, he was the object of Athenian ridicule and raillery. Yet, in the midst of so many causes of

* See an excellent article in the Evangelical Magazine for 1810, p. 266, &c.

grief, he exhorts the Thessalonians to "rejoice evermore;" not that he meant to render them insensible to the evils which he suffered at the time, nor did he wish them to disregard the afflictions which they were called to endure for the sake of their attachment to Christ and his cause; but he wished them to remember that all the afflictions which might befall them as Christians, were designed to promote their spiritual improvement, and consequently were, in reality, subjects of joy. "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations (or trials), knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience," &c. It is in affliction especially that the consolations of divine grace are richly communicated.*

Sometimes it will be necessary to advert to the state of the writer as a rule of interpretation; and in this case it is equivalent to what is called the occasion or the scope of a book, a psalm, a prophecy, or an epistle, which is one of the very first rules of exposition, the soberest and safest. Expositors are generally pretty careful on this point, and you may refer to T. H. Horne's Introduction, vol. ii., part 2, sect. vii., or other similar works. Roberts's Key to the Scriptures is very excellent in this view, and not very costly,† to which, with respect to a part, I add with great pleasure Wilson on the Romans, which is also of moderate price.

Occasionally this topic forms the main subject of a text, and consequently should form the ground-work of the whole or the principal part of a discourse. Take, for instance, Phil. ii. 5—11: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here you might very properly consider,

I. The state of Jesus in his humiliation:—He "made himself of no reputation," &c.
 II. The exaltation by which it was followed:—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," &c.

III. The inseparable connexion between them. Jesus here acted upon his own rule: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Take also a more extended example on James v. 10: "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

You may form your exordium upon this observation:—God, foreseeing and ordaining the afflictions of his people (1 Thess. iii. 3), has provided certain relief or supports under them, viz., his covenant (2 Sam. xxi. 5), his precious promises (2 Pet. i. 4), the directions of his word (Ps. cxix. 105), and the examples of his suffering prophets and apostles. The last of these is

* Whenever an observation is made of this or any other kind, involving a fact, it is of great consequence that we first ascertain that the fact upon which we found the observation is fully established. In this very instance a doubt exists with many learned men, as to whether the apostle really was at Athens when he wrote the epistle in question, though it is so stated at the end of the book. My only reason for noticing this is to put the student upon his guard in such matters.

† Most of our expositors are great borrowers from Roberts's Key.

pointed out in the text ; and, though the apostles are not mentioned, yet may they with singular propriety be included, for the former without the latter did not complete God's design, as Paul intimates, Heb. xi. 40. Then proceed to consider,

I. The subject of the apostle's exhortation. This is *patience* under suffering. The apostle James judged in this case, as Paul did under similar circumstances, that they had "need of patience" (Heb. x. 36), and that they ought to exercise it. Consider,

1. What is here meant by the word *patience*. And, because the true meaning is here of great importance, you will suffer me to detain you a little.

(1.) Negatively. [1.] It is not a stupid insensibility. Some persons are hardly excited by anything ; they are almost without passions ; this is a mere constitutional defect, and not a Christian virtue. [2.] It is not receiving indignities or persecution in a sullen temper, provoked, but not to retaliation or reply. This character merely creeps out of the way. [3.] In this text it is not merely a passive quality, or the receiving injury without resenting it, which may be the case where there is neither power nor right to resent (as in 1 Pet. ii. 20) ; this is pure passiveness ; the mind has neither energy nor purpose. This is the lowest degree of virtue that can be of this kind, yet under certain circumstances it is becoming. This is called *patience*, but it is because language is too poor to make a distinction.

(2.) Positively. It is an active grace of the Christian,* for, where a person can avoid the things that he suffers, he has a choice to suffer or not to suffer, the choosing to suffer must be active ; and therefore this is a Christian grace of the highest order. To apply this to the case before us, the persons written to were converts from Judaism and they voluntarily suffered as such ; for by returning to Judaism, they might have escaped persecution, in which case the Jews would have triumphed beyond measure.

Patience is sometimes nearly allied to fortitude, and implies a continued act ; it is not the grace of a day or a year, but partakes of the durability of all the graces which the God of all grace confers on his people ; and therefore the conduct which becomes Christians is denominated by St. Paul "a patient continuance in well-doing," "holding the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," being "stedfast and immovable," &c. It is the patience of the volunteer soldier on a long and hazardous march, and not the patience of the prisoner, who must remain in confinement, whether he will or no, till an exchange of prisoners takes place. This point I think extremely material to the subject before us.

2. This exhortation to exercise it. There is a kind of exhortation nearly like an admonition or severe address ; but that of the text is couched in the language of kind entreaty : "Take, my brethren ; I call you by that endearing name ; suffer me to urge upon you, for the honour of the cause, for Christ's sake, for your own honour, for my honour as your minister, to exercise active patience, or we shall be all ruined together ; but rather 'glorify God in the day of visitation,' 'for now we live if you stand fast in the Lord.' Your enemies can but take away your lives, that will be glory to you ; they may injure you, but injuries here will meet with justice hereafter ; whereas if you draw back, though this might procure you an abatement of persecution, yet the fearful coward is always despised, and by all men the apostate is cast out for ever. There is then but one course for you to take, and to that I here exhort you : be patient under your varied sufferings, and take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for examples." And this leads us to consider,

II. The argument upon which the exhortation is founded. The holy prophets have gone before you in the same path of honour and renown. So St. James might be supposed to speak ; and I beg leave to take up the argument, and to show that these examples were necessary, and in every view proper to the occasion.

1. These examples were necessary, and will always be so, in addition to all the other means used for the support of suffering saints. Covenants, promises, and counsels have respectively great weight. Covenants and promises took the lead. Examples could only grow out of circumstances and the advance of Church history ; but the want of them at first was severely felt. From the want of these Job's friends argued upon false premises, and gave themselves a great deal of unnecessary trouble, produced a great deal of smoke, but without any of the fire of truth. They did not possess the information requisite to enable them to determine the case of Job, and to clear his cha-

* The very learned Mr. Tuckney says patience is both active and passive. Mr. Crabb also concurs in this sense.

racter. We may have a "great zeal for God, but not according to knowledge;" we may speak "unadvisedly with our lips," our tongues running faster than our understanding, and especially when we "add affliction to the afflicted." Hence Eliphaz very boldly asks, Who ever perished in name, body, or estate, being innocent? Job. iv. 7. Eliphaz had no precedents before him; this was not altogether his fault; for it was a natural defect of the patriarchal age. Job himself felt the want of historical evidence; for he was, as he says, "persecuted" by his friends (Job xix. 22, an occurrence which sometimes happens now), and yet he could not recur to the testimony of God for comfort. Suffering saints were not then upon record. David's persecutions also offered a new case, and hence a variety of expressions of his appear not seasoned with the useful knowledge which we possess. Jeremiah also says, in the name of the church, "Was there ever any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" From these citations, and a little reflection upon the frame of the human mind, and how it is affected by what it is able to observe in the occurrences of the world, particularly as to similarities of experience among fellow-mortals of the same character and condition, it is very evident that examples of suffering in the cause of virtue must be of essential service to persons in such a state.

2. These examples were in every view proper for the occasion upon which they were offered.

(1.) They were such as reflected honour upon the divine character. They show his love and regard to his people in affording such examples, Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Rom. xv. 4. They show *that* love progressively manifesting itself in preparing such examples as were adapted to a season of great distress in the Church. They show the divine munificence in giving us examples of the *highest order*, not of obscure individuals, or such as were only to be known by their names for the purposes of genealogy, like those in the first eight or nine chapters of the First Book of Chronicles, or mere unnecessary circumstances of history that such humble individuals fell into a great deal of trouble; but these examples were taken from the Lord's prophets, persons entrusted with the Lord's secrets, his ambassadors, who spoke "in the name of the Lord," as the text expresses it. These were the most honourable of all characters; and, in every age, those who speak "in the name of the Lord" faithfully and zealously are in fact the most honourable of all men; they are "vessels selected for the Master's use." Other distinguished characters of the world are appointed to do service to the Lord's servants, or appointed to serve their fellow-creatures; even kings serve, rule, and defend the common people, the greater part of whom do no great honour to their lords. But those who are admitted into God's secret counsels, that speak in his great name, not to utter the laws of civil society, but to promulgate the gracious designs of God as to eternal concerns, are the most honourable of all, so long as their character and conduct correspond with their office. The prophets, however, to whom the text refers, were all of most honourable name, and their memories are imperishable. These were selected to become the examples of active patience, bringing Christians of after-times into very good company, to which none can properly object.

God had special regard to every thing that was necessary to prepare these prophets for their becoming complete examples. He not only sanctified their persons, but also their state. He weaned them from the world, rendered them spiritually-minded, of a self denying disposition. He placed them in a state of suffering, permitted evil men to rage against them, to persecute them (Matt. v. 12, and xxiii. 27; Heb. xi. 34, 35, &c.), to put many of them to death: and indeed without this course they could not have become examples of patience at all. Notwithstanding these adverse circumstances, the faithfulness of God could not be impeached with respect to them; if he did not protect them from loss of property or life, yet he preserved their honour and their eternal reward, and even in their adversity he made "all things to work together for their good." Their honour rose resplendent after their death, and their very enemies joined in their praise. God also honoured these holy men by fulfilling their prophecies so minutely as to furnish incontestable evidence of their inspiration, and afford a sure ground of confidence to believers in every succeeding age. We are, at this moment, in actual possession of those gospel privileges which they predicted. Some things, indeed, remain yet to be accomplished; but we look forward in certain expectation that every prophecy will in due time be fulfilled, satisfied that none of their words can fall to the ground.

But whatever was fulfilled in these holy servants of the Lord, as patterns of active patience and suffering, was without comparison more conspicuously exemplified in the Lord himself, the Lord Jesus, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

"No sorrow was ever like his sorrow;" and this was most voluntary, for he could have consumed his enemies in a moment with the "breath of his mouth;" but how then were the scriptures to be fulfilled? How then were sinners to be redeemed? How then was he to be the prince of patience—the leader of the holy band? The apostles followed after to bring up the rear, and "to supply what was lacking" in the sufferings of Christ and of his holy prophets

(2.) They were exactly accommodated to the state of man. The state of the prophets and writers of scripture fitted them for examples to man as man. Had this state been different from what it was, as I have already hinted, the instruction could not have come home to the common feelings of mankind, could not have been brought down to the level of plebian comprehension. The covenants and promises of God, with deductions of reason founded on them, or arguments to sustain them, require in the subject some degree of moral culture not generally found among the mass of mankind, though common to Christians of more perfect growth, of a higher stature, more replete in "word and doctrine." But these are the minority of believers as to numbers; the majority, the mass, must have a lesson closely addressed to their eyes, as such examples of scripture and of the apostles actually were. These were to be excited to active Christian patience as well as the most intelligent, because they were also exposed to persecution; for if the common rank gave way the cause would be ruined; it would be to little purpose that the chiefs stood more firmly. Here, then, we see the excellency, the perfect adaptation, of such examples to ordinary Christians.

It has been frequently observed that man is a creature more easily led by the eye than the ear. Gideon thought so. He had a rude sort of army to manage. Verbal directions might be misunderstood; therefore said he, "Look on me, and as I do so shall you do," Judges vii. I do not wish to speak disrespectfully of my weaker brethren, but the fact is so with regard to them, and, in a measure, with us also. We are dull of hearing, but a thing to be imitated cannot well be misunderstood.

Then, again, the imitation to which we are called is the imitation of men like ourselves, who had no physical capacities peculiar to them. I could not imitate an angel, because he would fly, and I could not follow him; but I can imitate a man if he run or walk. Here is neither mystery nor difficulty; it is quite easy to comprehend what it is "to be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." These holy prophets live before our eyes; they endured as "seeing him who is invisible." It is remarkable how much of divine instruction is in scripture addressed to the eye, and especially by our Saviour. When John sent his disciples for a demonstration that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus took this method: "In the same hour he did many wonderful miracles. Go now," says the Saviour, "and tell John what you have seen," Luke vii. 22. Man not only may be excited to imitation, but it is natural to him. Man has long enough been the slave of imitation to evil; the gospel now takes hold of this propensity to draw him to good. So we see that divine teaching does not outrage human nature, but works upon what it finds there. The Gospel reforms, but does not destroy. We here see how careful we must be that our example be correct, that we may be able to say, as St. Paul does, "Be you followers of me."

Our text furnishes another point of observation: Man has a propensity to imitate those that are above him. There are, indeed, some base minds that are bent upon following the lowest examples; but this is only the depravity of a fallen nature in its lowest grade. Man generally looks upwards. Here, then, we see the propriety of referring to the greatest names of antiquity, to the holy prophets, as examples of active patience, as well as the propriety of "looking to Jesus," the perfection of all example, who endured to the end his arduous conflict for our salvation.

It is not necessary to prosecute this view of suitability further. The examples proposed are completely *argumenta ad homines*, and if this does not prevail nothing can. This point is so clear and undeniable that nothing could bring more glory to the wisdom, and goodness, and condescension of God, and nothing could be so suitable to the state of man. You will, of course, perceive that in the latter part of the foregoing example it has been my object to show the value and importance of the Topic. In *preaching* on the text you will select such observations as bear most directly on the point in hand, and connect them with such statements, appeals, &c., as may appear best adapted to stimulate, encourage, and support the minds of your

people, and lead them to the exercise of that patience of which the prophets were such bright examples.

In concluding this Lecture I beg leave to remind you that you cannot consider a great number of scriptures to advantage without considering the state of the holy writers, and this you must do in every possible point of view. Without this, in some instances, you destroy the sense, in others the point, the marrow, of the instruction intended. You must carefully mark the design of God in ordering the state of the speakers "who have spoken in the name of the Lord," the argument which that state furnishes, the authority which it confers, and all the excellent advantages appended to this connexion of things. And may the Lord increase your wisdom and confirm your judgment to this end !

LECTURE XV.

TOPIC VIII.

REMARK THE TIME OF A WORD OR ACTION.

If words fitly spoken be, as Solomon terms them, like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and if to be fitly spoken they must be well-timed, then this Topic is certainly worthy of regard. Its application is not perhaps so extensive as that of some others, but it is by no means destitute of utility or importance. As a topic of observation, there are many passages of scripture with reference to which it will suggest valuable instruction. A consideration of the time when an action was performed, a duty enjoined, a caution or promise given, &c., will frequently throw a strong light upon the action or expression, and enable us to look at it under a new aspect, to perceive its propriety, or to feel its force, more than we could have done had this Topic been overlooked.

Monsieur Claude remarks, for example, "St. Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, requires that in the public services of the church prayers should be made for *all men* ; but *first for kings, and for those that are in authority*, 1 Tim. ii. 1—3. Here it is very natural to remark the time. It was when the church and the apostles were every where persecuted, when the faithful were the objects of the hatred and calumny of all mankind, and in particular of the cruelty of these tyrants. Yet none of this rough treatment could stop the course of Christian charity. St. Paul not only requires every believer to pray for all men, but he would have it done in *public*, that all the world might know the maxims of Christianity, always kind, patient, and benevolent. Believers must consider themselves as bound in duty to all men, though men do nothing to oblige them to it. The apostle was aware that malicious slanderers would call this worldly policy and human prudence, and would say that Christians only meant to flatter the great and to court their favour ; yet even the plausibility of this calumny did not prevent St. Paul. He directs the faithful to pray *publicly*, and *first* for civil governors. We ought always to discharge our duty, and, for the rest, submit to the unjust accounts that men give of our conduct."

Again : Suppose you are preaching on the choice of Moses, Heb. xi. 24, 25, you may remark, either in your exordium or as one subdivision of your discourse, that the *time* when Moses identified himself with the people of God affords an illustration of the reality and strength of his faith. It was

"when he had come to years" of maturity, capable of judging and acting for himself. Had he taken so decided a step while in his minority, it might have been traced solely to the influence exerted over him, and he might afterwards have repented of his rashness. It was moreover at a time when he was surrounded with the luxuries of an Egyptian court, when even the sceptre of royalty seemed probably within his grasp. Add to this that the Israelites were then grievously oppressed, and he could not expect to join them without sharing their afflictions. Thousands are induced to connect themselves with the people of God when a profession of religion is in general esteem who would not continue, much less commence such a course, at a time when it involved the sacrifice of wealth, and honour, and ease, and subjected them to actual suffering. But Moses, being strong in faith, hesitated not. Had he possessed less confidence in God, this test would have been too severe, and he would have found little difficulty in excusing himself. He might have alleged the impossibility of his affording any assistance to his brethren if once he acknowledged himself an Israelite and rejected his adopted relationship, and, on the other hand, the probability that if he remained in his present station he might hope to procure them some mitigation of their sufferings and even eventually deliver them. Many, under his circumstances, would have contented themselves by concluding that the time had not come; but so did not Moses, because of the fear of the Lord.*

Or suppose you are illustrating the words which David addressed to his men in the cave of En-gedi, with reference to Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4—6, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him," &c. Here you might observe that at any other time these words would simply have expressed David's professed abhorrence of the act, without furnishing any proof of his sincerity; but the time when they were uttered renders them a complete development of the real state of his mind with regard to Saul, and affords proof, not only of his integrity, but of the strength and firmness of his principles. He had been hunted by Saul like a partridge upon the mountains, and had been obliged to escape for his life to the woods and to the wilderness. He was now in the most imminent danger. Had Saul and his men awoke, they would not have hesitated about his destruction. He had an opportunity of ridding himself at once of his bitterest enemy, under circumstances which, in the sight of the people, would have been no reproach to his character. His followers urged him to do so by an argument that that might appear to justify him: "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thy enemy into thy hand," &c. But David nobly rejected their counsel and spared the life of Saul.

Or take the prayer of the dying thief, Luke xxiii. 42: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." On this subject several of the Topics would furnish suitable remarks; and with reference to the Topic now under consideration, it may be observed that the time when this dying penitent addressed Christ as his Lord was the time of Christ's deepest humiliation. It was not when the Saviour was greeted by the acclamations of the multitude, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," &c, nor when there was a general desire to invest him with kingly power; but when he

* See Burroughs on Moses's Choice—very full and excellent.

had been condemned as a blasphemer and an impostor, both by the ecclesiastical and civil rulers, the people unitedly vociferating, "Crucify him! crucify him!" His glory was now concealed by a cloud, through which his most attached followers could not penetrate. Alarmed and confounded, notwithstanding the precision with which our Lord had forewarned them of the event, they all forsook him and fled. The faith of the thief seemed alone to rise above all outward obstacles, and, at the very time when the powers of earth and hell supposed that the pretensions of Christ were completely overturned, he prayed to him as to one who was about to take triumphant possession of a kingdom.

These brief examples will, it is presumed, be amply sufficient to point out the utility and assist in the application of our Topic. There is, however, a more general view of time on which I shall take leave to offer a few remarks. I mean the consideration of *time* as a gift of God, a talent to be improved, and by you to be urged with the solemnity and zeal becoming the subject, in the humble hope of reaching conviction to the mind of some hitherto careless and unthinking mortal, who may have been acting upon its momentary dependence, as if his time were to endure for ever, as if "to-morrow were to be as to day, and much more abundant." And here, in fact, we have an individual concern. If God marks time, as his word assures us he does, then we must mark time also, or accounts will not at last agree. If time flies, we must improve it, and fly with it; and if we do not, we must smart for our neglect. Taking into view the interest that your hearers have in your faithful warnings and admonitions, and your individual responsibility, and remembering that you cannot ensure a day to yourselves, that your times are absolutely in the Lord's hands, that he can cut the thread of life at any definite moment perfectly unknown to you, it must be plain that such certain knowledge connected with neglect must bring an aggravated accumulation of guilt. And if we may allow our thoughts to pass into the next state of existence, where the unhappy spirits of darkness are awaiting final judgment, can we imagine any thing more cutting to their sensitive minds than that which the loss of opportunities and means of grace occasions them? What a volume would their reflections form upon the sad loss they have sustained? How awful if the appendix to that volume should declare, with reference to any one who may have attended our ministry, that the preacher failed to warn them of the ruin which they were bringing upon themselves by their impenitency and unbelief! But, thanks to Heaven! we yet have time in some portion. Let us meditate on the words of the Saviour, "I must work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." Let us take the apostle Paul as our example in this particular. We see him continually intent upon redeeming time in his own conduct; his was the most laborious human effort to improve it that is to be found on record. He spent no part of his days in curious enquiries or knotty speculations, much less in amusements and visitings, except from "house to house" to teach, to warn, to persuade, and to counsel concerning the speedy approach of Christ to judgment, and to urge immediate faith and repentance on all classes of society; and, if he committed his counsels to writing, he carefully urged "the redeeming of time." This must be our immediate course, and may the Lord assist us to be faithful to Christ, to our people, and to ourselves!

Now my desire is, next to your personal profit, that you may turn our

present Topic to your people's advantage. To assist you in doing this I have selected from various authors the outlines of subjects upon which you might dwell. I do not say that you are to copy these examples *verbatim*, for this is against my own plan; but these outlines will suggest to you the course you are to pursue.

It was said of the great Mr. Baxter that he preached on time and eternity as if he had one foot in the grave and the other ready to follow. And indeed, unless you have a similarly deep impression on your minds, it will be a sad indication of your unfitness for the service you are here called to perform. The subject must be first a matter of personal feeling and then the matter of exhortation to others; but I hope and trust we shall have nothing to lament on this head.

First: I shall refer you to a few examples wherein the importance of time is prominent.

Simeon on Hos. x. 12: "It is time to seek the Lord." He considers,

I. The duty enjoined.

II. The arguments which enforce it.

The above text may be treated in the interrogative form, as follows:—

I. What is the world about? Not seeking the Lord.

II. What ought *we* to be about? Seeking most earnestly.

III. What may we expect to find if we seek? A covenant and gracious God.

Morning Exercises, vol. ii., p. 92, on 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2: "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

I. A twice-repeated excitement, to improve the present season.

II. A double argument to convince: 1st, From its fitness, it is day-time; 2ndly, It is the accepted time, the day of salvation.

Eastcheap Lectures, vol. ii., p. 140, on Heb. iii. 7: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," &c.

I. Consider the dignity and authority of Christ who calls.

II. The important things you are called to regard.

III. Consider that it is only TO-DAY that you are invited.

IV. The awful consequences of neglect in the example of the Jews, and other descriptions of persons to whom this season is lost for ever.

Duche, vol. ii., on Eccles. iii. 1: "For every purpose there is a time."

I. Every moment comes to us charged with some important duty.

II. The minutest occurrences of a day may have consequences that reach forward to eternity.

III. Therefore time must be seized as it flies.

This sermon is very eloquent; but it is founded on merely moral principles, without, or nearly without those evangelical statements which will, I hope, mark all your sermons.

Archbishop Leighton, without a division, on Ps. xxxii. 6: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found."

Surely every rational being will without delay invoke so gentle and mild a Lord, will pray unto him while he is exorable—"in a time of finding" (Heb.) for he promises pardon, though he does not promise to-morrow. There are the *tempora fandi*, certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and grace, which if a man by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal night and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of divine wrath, since he has contemned and derided that ark of salvation which was prepared, and into which whosoever enters shall be safe, while the

world is perishing. Though all be one unbounded sea, a sea without a shore, yet, as it is here said, the greatest inundation—"the floods of deep waters shall not come nigh unto him."

Secondly: We shall now quote a few examples on passages that refer to the fact of time's speedy termination. "The night cometh, and the shadows of the evening must soon be stretched out."

Simeon on Joel iii. 13: "Put you in the sickle," &c.

I. What is it that makes us ripe for the great harvest?

II. What are the marks of our being ripe?

III. What shall be done when we are ripe?

Davies, vol. ii., p. 34, on Jer. xxviii. 16: "This year thou shalt die."*

I. Consider that this year you may die; it is quite possible.

II. What will be the consequence if this event should actually occur.

III. Let us, then, wisely meet these possibilities and consequences.

Dr. Watts on Rev. x. 5, 6: "The angel—sware—that there should be time no longer."

I. The time for the recovery of fallen nature will be no longer.

II. Seasons and means of grace will be no longer.

III. Time for prayer and repentance will be no longer.

IV. However wretched our state, then the day of hope ends; the king of terrors will realize all that his name imports to the impenitent.

V. All the seasons of carnal gratification will end.

Boston, folio edit., p. 581, on the same text.

I. The truth itself, that there is a period set which time cannot exceed.

II. The weight of this truth, and its concern to all men.

III. Apply the subject.

Thirdly: Passages that give tokens or signs of the times.

Mr. Wesley, vol. v., p. 240, on Matt. xvi. 3: "And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O you hypocrites! you can discern the face of the sky; but can you not discern the signs of the times?"

I. What times were those which our Lord is here speaking about?

II. What are the times which we have reason to believe are now at hand?

Simeon on Rom. xiii. 12: "The night is far spent," &c.

I. Confirm the truth of the apostle's assertion.

II. Enforce the exhortation grounded upon it.

Fourthly: Passages which furnish similes of life's brevity.

James iv. 14: "For what is your life?"

I. Amplify the enquiry.

II. Examine what improvement such views suggest.

Jer. viii. 7: "The stork in the heaven knoweth," &c.

I. Consider the occasion of these words.

II. The truth of them.

III. The design of them.

Fifthly: Passages in admonition in reference to the subject.

Burn, p. 110, on Eccles. ix. 10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," &c.

I. There is work to be done by every one of us, in time.

* The preacher pronounced this upon himself, for he died in thirty-five days after preaching this sermon—an immense loss to the Church.

II. The manner in which it is to be done—"With all thy might."

III. The motive: the opportunity will soon cease, for no work can be done in the grave, &c.

The same author, on 2 Cor. v. 11: "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

I. A powerful argument used—the day of the Lord's terrors, &c.

II. The undoubted certainty of it—"Knowing," &c.

III. The end in view in naming it—"To persuade men."

Mr. Wesley on Eph. v. 16: "Redeeming the time," &c. Consider,

I. What it is to redeem time.

II. The evil of not redeeming it.

III. The most effectual manner of doing it.

Archbishop Tillotson on John ix. 4: "I must work the work of him that sent me," &c.

I. Every man has a work assigned him—"I must work."

II. There is a certain limited time for it—"Whilst it is day."

III. That expired, the opportunity is lost—"The night cometh."

Walker, vol. iii., p. 129, on Prov. vi. 6, 7: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," &c.

I. Consider the character here addressed—the sluggard.

II. The counsel given to him—to consider the conduct of the ant.

"Man, that was once the captain of God's school, is now for his ill-behaviour turned down into the lowest form, as it were, to learn his A, B, C, again—yea, to be taught by the meanest creatures. Christ sends us to school to the birds of the air and lilies of the field to learn the lesson of dependence on divine Providence (Matt. vi.); Jeremiah sends us to the stork, the crane, and the swallow (Jer. vii.); Isaiah leads us to the crib of the ox and the ass; and here Solomon directs us to the ant. This poor despicable creature is placed in the chair to read us a lecture of sedulity and good husbandry. What a deal of grain she collects together in the summer! What pains does she take for it, not by day only, but by moonlight also! What huge heaps has she! What care to bring forth her store, and lay it a drying on a sunshiny day, lest the moisture should destroy it!"—*Trapp* on Prov. vi. 6.

Manton, vol. v., p. 1029, on the same text.

I. The learner.

II. The teacher.

III. The lesson.

IV. The example.

Sixthly: The dreadful consequences of neglect.

Beddome, vol. iii., p. 15, on Luke xix. 41—44. "He beheld the city, and wept over it," etc.

I. What our Saviour did.

II. What he said—"If thou hadst known," &c.

Simeon on Jer. viii. 20—22: "The harvest is past," &c.

I. To whom does this representation refer?

II. The misery of their state.

III. The remedy remaining.

On this point you may consult with advantage Alleine's *Alarm*, and Ambrose's *Last Things*. It is of great consequence to warn sinners of their danger, that we be not partakers in their guilt. "There is yet room."

Seventhly: For turning this subject to consolation, as Simeon on Isa. xxx. 26: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun," &c. There are special seasons when this representation shall be verified, as

I. At our first reconciliation to God.

- II. At any return of light and favour after darkness of soul.
- III. At the hour of our dissolution.

Dwight, vol v., p. 533, on 2 Pet. iii. 13: "We look for new heavens," &c.

Time having been often the medium of misery to the saints, it shall soon terminate in eternity. Hence consider,

- I. The residence of the saints.
- II. Their character.*
- III. Their employment.
- IV. Their enjoyments.

You may refer to the whole of Dwight's Discourse; also to Mitchel on Future Glory, Watts's Scale of Blessedness, and many others. This blessed state should be upon our hearts to administer support, to comfort us in all the trials of the ministry, and, along with the cautions of the former part of the subject, we shall be thereby greatly assisted to preach on eternity.

In conclusion of this article, allow me to say, I think it would be of great service to you, as tending to render you quite familiar with the subject, if you were to write a treatise, a long one, upon the whole subject, embracing the fact of time's speedy termination—tokens of this speedy termination—similes of scripture illustrating it—scripture admonitions and examples—the certain ruin attending neglect—the comforts of the saints in relation to time and in anticipation of eternity, &c. As you cannot devote one regular and complete season for the purpose, take the intervals of time, the opportunities that God gives you, writing a page now and a page then, until it shall be complete. This will familiarize the subject to you, and administer a superior fluency of address on a subject of great importance to your ministrations. We cannot know any preacher long without perceiving upon what his thoughts more familiarly dwell; upon that subject, if on any, he is sure to be eloquent. The eloquence of Baxter, Alleine, and Shore, on our subject, proves that it was one of the great master subjects on which their minds rested.

Independently of choice, you will find seasons and occasions that will almost compel you to advert to this Topic—perhaps your personal deliverance from imminent dangers, funeral services, new-years' days, &c. To have your thoughts, therefore, always familiar with the subject will at once be your duty and your happiness. This, in an important sense, is truly to "watch for the coming of our Lord."

TOPIC IX.

OBSERVE PLACE.

THE Topic on which we are now entering, and that which has just been considered (and indeed the sixth and seventh Topics also), have in one point of view a very near affinity; the grounds on which they demand our attention, and the rules which regulate their application in preaching, are the same. It is consequently unnecessary to dwell on the illustration of the present Topic, as what I have said in reference to time may with some

* Their character is described as follows:—as being composed of body and mind—made perfect—redeemed—adopted. They are to each other brethren—to the angels companions—kings and priests unto God and the Lamb.

modifications be applied to place. That our reflections on the place where any thing, concerning which we may be discoursing, was said or done, may sometimes suggest observations calculated to elucidate, confirm, or enrich the subject, must, I conceive, be obvious. In the language of scripture frequent allusion is made to the appearances by which the inspired penmen were surrounded. Whether they wrote in Palestine the land of promise, or in Babylon the seat of captivity,—whether Jerusalem or Athens, or Rome, formed the scene of their labours,—whether they taught in the city, or the desert, or the field, the phenomena presented to their observation furnished materials on which to graft their admonitions and counsels. The propriety and force of many passages can consequently be appreciated only in proportion as we are made acquainted with the peculiarities of those places to which such allusions refer; hence the value of those researches into the geography, climate, customs, &c., of Judea, which have been applied to illustrate the sacred volume. But, even where no direct allusion is made, our Topic may sometimes be applied with advantage, as that which is said or done at one place or under particular circumstances may possess more force than the same thing at another place or under other circumstances. (See p. 165, note from Jones.)

Take the exhortation of Paul, Phil. iii. 13: "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The place where he writes this, Claude observes, furnishes a very beautiful consideration.* He was then in prison at Rome, loaded with chains, and deprived of his liberty; yet he speaks as if he were as much at liberty as any man in the world, as able to act as he pleased and to dispose of himself as ever; he talks of having entered a course, running a race, forgetting things behind, pressing towards those that were before, and, in short, of hoping to gain a prize. All these are actions of a man enjoying full liberty. How could he who was in prison be at the same time on a race-course? How could he run who was loaded with irons? How could he hope to win a prize who every day expected a sentence of death? But it is not difficult to reconcile these things: his bonds and imprisonment did not hinder the course of faith and obedience. His prison was converted into an agreeable stadium, and death for the gospel might well be considered under the image of complete victory; for a martyr gains an unfading crown as a reward of his sufferings.

It is not necessary to add here any further example in illustration of the Topic, as to its primary intention. What has been said will, I presume, be sufficient to show the propriety of availing yourselves of the advantages which this source of reflection may furnish; but it may not be inappropriate to offer a few remarks on the consideration of place in general, particularly of places referred to or described in scripture. In this respect the Topic has already been introduced into these Lectures, as it falls under one of the regular interrogations, and my returning to it again is a mere matter of

[* For the illustration of Paul's life and writings under this topic, the preacher should diligently read Conybeare and Howson's most able work. A good acquaintance with sacred geography is now easily acquired through Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine," Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," Thomson's "The Land and the Book," &c. For the life of Christ, these works are rendered available through Dr. Ellicott's Hulsean Lectures, and Andrews' "Our Lord's Life on the Earth."]

eligibility, and because something remains to be said upon it. It is truly a most copious and exuberant Topic; for every occurrence past and present has a place of acting, and every declaration of futurity has a place referred to, important to some of mankind or to all. It is connected with our history, with our offices or agencies, with our pleasures and our pains, our changes and vicissitudes in life. The idea of place presents itself to our minds throughout all the regions of excursive imagination in a manner quite spontaneously and without effort. It is absolutely essential to all detail and description, to all histories and transactions. It is the aid of memory; it reminds us of our earliest and sweetest attachments; it points us to the grave and to the final destinies of all mankind. The degree of importance we should assign to it in preaching of course requires discrimination. In some cases the place referred to may be of no importance whatever; we care nothing about the place where Doeg the Edomite was buried, or whether he was ever buried at all. But in many other cases it is all-important, as a little examination will fully evince. Its particular utility to a preacher, either by way of evidence or observation, is beyond dispute. Frequently your application of the Topic will be confined to a casual remark; but it may occasionally furnish the basis of a full subject, particularly in reference to what we call typical places, or holy places, constituted for the observation, instruction, and benefit of mankind. On this account I now resume the subject; but not having any adequate example in print (which I always prefer) I shall be obliged to offer you one of my own, wherein place, as a type, is considered somewhat extensively; and, that you may fully enter into my views, I shall give this example at length. The authors whom I possess just introduce the typical place, and then commence a discourse upon the subject to which the type refers; and they seem alarmed lest they should be ranked among the visionaries—a class of persons among whom I have no great inclination to stand, having myself spoken unfavourably of Mr. Keach in reference to this matter. Still I must be allowed to say that we ought not to leave a type till it leaves us. So long as a type will speak intelligibly and profitably, let it speak. Many of the types not only have doctrines contained in them of very high importance, but also doctrines that will run parallel with their types from beginning to end, and where the type cannot be dropped at all without the most manifest injury to the scriptures and loss to the hearers. I should consequently recommend to you, as students, to take an extensive view of your type; let your sketch lie by you for a week or two, then review it, and cut out whatever is beyond sobriety of mind and sound judgment.

The example which I now offer you is founded on Ps. 1:2: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, hath God shined."*

The book of God has a language peculiar to itself. Its idiom or character is purely Hebrew. Even those parts which were written in Syriac or Greek differ not materially in this respect; for though the mere words may be Syriac or Greek, the original characteristics remain clearly intelligible. The style is frequently rich, sententious, poetical, majestic, or sublime, full of localities, or names of places peculiar to Judea, such as Jerusalem, Zion, &c., which are remarkably beautiful, and capable of high spiritual meaning without any unnatural force being put upon them. Now what I have principally in view is to point out the great advantages to be obtained by us in understanding as much as possible the natural history and religious allusions of certain

* This discourse may be regarded as a specimen of exposition, the subject of Lecture IV.

places so frequently noticed in scripture, that we may perceive more of the beauty of scripture language, and be enabled more accurately to understand the spiritual instruction thus incidentally conveyed to us.

The most celebrated place, and the most important in all Judea, was Mount Zion. Under this name we suppose Mount Moriah to be included ; and these together formed the supereminent part of the famous city of Jerusalem. Let us therefore consider the text,

I. In reference to its primary intention.

We may observe, in general, that it is called "Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty" (Lam. ii. 15)—matchless, peerless. Much has been said in praise of the site upon which the city of Tyre was built, and the magnificence established upon it is described by Ezekiel the prophet, chap. xxvii. Such was its strength that Nebuchadnezzar besieged it thirteen years before he could reduce it; the siege continued "till every head was bald and every shoulder peeled;" but so much greatness without reference to divine things was only like those things "that pass away" and that vanish from the eye of the beholder. More justly famed was Mount Sinai in the wilderness. Fertile valleys and flowing streams delight the eye and please the senses, Ps. xxiii. 2, lxx. 13, &c.; Isa. lx. 13; Ps. civ. 10. It is however the bold and rocky mountain that strikes the mind with sublimity, veneration, and solemn awe. Such was Mount Sinai; but this mountain was rendered more sublime, more terrific still, when Jehovah descended upon it to deliver his most holy law to his people. "In blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet" (Heb. xii. 18), he came thereon, "with ten thousand of his saints." "From his right hand went forth the fiery law," Deut. xxxiii. 2. While these terrors were revealed on the mount, the people of Israel at its base were almost petrified with astonishment, and even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Mount Sinai, then, will be justly famed for its natural grandeur, and yet more for the descent of the Deity upon it. Still it proclaimed "the ministry of condemnation," and we must allow pre-eminence to that of a milder glory, to "Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty;" this place was designed to receive the highest honour of any spot on the face of the earth.

Mount Zion was a rock, or a union of rocks under one name. On that part called Zion proper the house or palace of David was built; Mount Moriah, which formed the other part, pretty generally lost its name, or was called by the name of the former; but this latter part lost nothing of its honour, for the Lord's tabernacle and afterwards the temple were built upon it.

It was in the early ages, and till David's reign, occupied by the Jebusites, who to the natural strength of the place added such fortifications as the military art of those ages afforded; and these Jebusites kept it against all the forces of Joshua and his successors for the space of 400 years. Its conquest was reserved for David. (2 Sam. v., and 1 Chron. xi.) Beginning at this point of Zion's history, we shall first point out some of its peculiar excellences, and then proceed to consider the effect produced—the glory of God shining forth from it.

1. We may notice the peculiar excellences of Mount Zion. These may be conveniently arranged under its natural, its elective, its figurative, and its typical grandeur, from the consideration of which it will appear to be appropriately designated "the perfection of beauty."

1.) Its natural splendour and excellency. This is most beautifully described in Ps. xlviii. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge: for, lo, the kings were assembled; they passed by together; they saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. As we have heard so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." So that *Decus et tutamen* might well be the motto inscribed upon it.

2.) Its elective honour. With respect to Zion proper, it was quite natural and politic that David should choose it for his palace and the seat of his government: that which we acquire with difficulty we much value. The Jebusites held it so proudly that they derided David in his attempt to take it: "Except thou take away the blind and lame, thou shalt not come hither;" as much as to say, We will commit its defence to the blind and the lame, and they shall repel thy feeble forces. Yet Joab, for the prize of honour and distinction, led the way and took the place by assault. It was a very ex-

traordinary event that determined the choice of the other or southern point, before called Mount Moriah, as the seat of the holy tabernacle. David had, some time previously, brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. At length, however, a memorable affliction visits the people on David's account. In the latter part of his reign the king of Israel issued his command for numbering the people (2 Sam. xxiv.), an action which, either in the matter or the motive of it, was highly displeasing to God; and the prophet Gad was despatched to the king to signify the divine displeasure and the determination to chastise him by a public calamity. He was allowed his choice of a seven years' famine, or to be pursued three months by his enemies, or to suffer by three days' pestilence; and David chose the last. "Let us," says he, "fall now into the hands of the Lord (for his mercies are great), and let me not fall into the hands of men." Upon this the pestilence went forth, and 70,000 of his people fell under this calamity. The destroying angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, but at that moment mercy prevailed over judgment: "The Lord said to the destroying angel, It is enough, stay now thy hand." Peace was now to be restored between an offended God and the guilty king; at this moment the angel was visible over the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, or, as he is elsewhere called, Ornan the Jebusite. To be a token of expiation, and to perpetuate the mercy which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance, this spot of ground where the angel was when the anger of the Lord was turning from David and his people, was to be made memorable for ever. Gad was despatched to David to signify that on that very spot Jehovah would accept burnt-offerings and peace-offerings at his hand. David hastes to Araunah and purchases the estate for a valuable consideration. He offers up sacrifices and peace-offerings, and there the Lord accepts the service. This demonstration of the divine favour respecting this spot determines David to remove the ark and the tabernacle to it for all future sacred services; and this very spot was a part of Mount Moriah, the southern point of Zion, whereon, in the following reign, the great temple was erected; it was also the happy spot on which Abraham had experienced delivering mercy when about to offer up his only son Issac, Gen. xxii. This mountain might therefore well be called the mount of mercy; it was highly suitable for an Ebenezer of the highest order and the most lasting fame.

From this brief historical sketch it appears that Zion was David's choice. But that which stamps a far higher value upon it is that Jehovah chose this spot. Happy is it for us when our choice and the Lord's choice concur. The Lord's election of Mount Zion is beautifully described in the 132nd Psalm: "For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it," &c. Here he made "the place of his feet glorious;" the altar of burnt-offerings, the holy fire, the altar of incense, the laver, the tables, the show-bread, the perpetual lamps, the veil, the ark, the mercy-seat, the table of testimony, the book of the law, the rod of Aaron, the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, the shechinah or holy cloud, the symbol of the divine presence, the Lord's high-priest to perform the holy service, the servants of the tabernacle, the Levites, the Koathites, the singers and players on instruments, all combined to form what the text calls "the perfection of beauty," during the time that this worldly sanctuary and these carnal ordinances were to remain in use, and until the ministry of the Levites was to give place to a more excellent ministry.

3) There was, moreover, a figurative grandeur resting on Mount Zion, which constituted a still more important part of its "perfection of beauty." Zion was in several respects a figure of God's church and people.

(1.) Zion may be considered as representing the strength and perpetuity of the church. Zion was a rock; and nothing in nature is stronger nor more durable than a rock. Hence Mount Zion was extremely formidable; "kings were assembled to view it, but when they saw it they hasted away." But the strength as well as the glory of Zion consisted in its being in a peculiar manner the residence of Jehovah, "the mountain of his holiness." God was in the midst of her, that she should not be moved. How aptly does this represent the strength of Jehovah as the defence of his people! He has built his spiritual Zion like high palaces, like the earth which he has established for ever, Ps. lxxviii. 69. Hence that striking and beautiful declaration, Ps. cxxv. 1: "Those that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever." Corresponding with this is the language of Isaiah: "Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." The sweet singer of Israel chants the divine praise in language of similar import when he says, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I trust." Thus also sang Hannah, the mother of Samuel: "Neither is there

any rock like unto our God." These and similar passages must be regarded as denoting, not what God is in himself, but particularly what he is in reference to his people. He is their rock, their refuge, and protection. Their safety, their eternal felicity, is secured on a basis that cannot fail; all his perfections are engaged in their defence.

(2.) Zion may also be considered as an emblem of the honour of the saints. On this place Jehovah was pleased to put peculiar honour. Here he was pleased in an important sense to dwell, and to display his glory in an extraordinary manner, making the place of his feet glorious. Hence it is represented as the place of his special delight: "He loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," Ps. lxxxvii. 2. To be born there was consequently accounted a high privilege, as the Psalmist intimates: "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man were born in her," Ps. lxxxvii. 5. Similar allusions are scattered throughout the sacred volume, particularly in the language of Jeremiah, Lam. iv. 2: "The precious sons of Zion were comparable to fine gold." May we not say, "such honour have all the saints?" Nay, the honour of literal Zion derived all its excellence and all its worth from the spiritual honour which it represented. The saints of God have the highest claim of birth, being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is they who in the highest sense have "come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," who are constituted "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light," and who "have their conversation (or citizenship) in heaven." In short, so numerous are the coincidences, and so remarkable their correspondence, that they enter into the very idiom of scripture, furnishing a language by which many ideas are rendered perfectly intelligible that would otherwise have been too remote for our understandings.

4) Zion had likewise a typical grandeur.

(1.) The rock of Zion typified Christ, against whom the "gates of hell shall never prevail." Had the church been built on a basis less firm than Christ, the powers of darkness would certainly have prevailed against it. Here then we reflect with delight on the fact that the whole church is in a state of safety, so that the safety of every individual is included. Christ is the Rock of Ages, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Then may "the inhabitants of the rock sing" for joy; for no evil day shall blast their expectations or shake their security. But this Rock is to some a "rock of offence;" many stumble at him and fall. This is a very awful circumstance.

(2.) The house of David, situated as we have described, typified Christ's house; or David, there presiding, represented the kingly power, the kingly office, of Christ: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," Ps. ii. 6. There "he must reign till all his enemies be made his footstool." The throne of our "David shall be established for ever."

(3.) The holy tabernacle situated on the southern point of Zion, as the house of David was on the northern, typified Christ's human nature, or the body in which he executes his priestly office. So the Saviour himself said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; but he spoke of the temple of his body," John ii. 19, 21. In short, there was not a thing about the tabernacle, nor an officiating person, but what typified Christ in his work, office, and character.

2. We must notice what is here affirmed respecting it: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, hath God shined." Its renown went forth among the heathen for its beauty. It was perfect through the comeliness which the Lord was pleased to put upon it, Ezek. xvi. 14. The glory of Jehovah's perfections shone through its symbols upon a benighted world. As the sun in the heavens declares the glory of God, and as the firmament shows forth his handy work, so it is in the case under consideration. Glorious as the works of God are here upon earth, yet they stand in need of a higher glory still. So the ancient world would have been infinitely more wretched than it was, but for the rays of light emitted from Zion upon it. From Egypt indeed the world learnt the doctrines of God's justice and severity against a flagitious king, the memorial of which is never to cease. From Mount Sinai the world learnt God's purity, holiness, and majesty; thence they received a perfect law which was never to be abrogated. But it was from Mount Zion that the world was to learn and behold with joy God's mercy and grace, the mild beams of which were then transmitted to distant nations; and, if it were not for the scantiness of historical records, there can be no doubt that this would be more apparent to us than it is.

1.) This glory which emanated from Zion was reflected upon the Israelitish nation.

Zion was, in those days, "the glory of the God of Israel." It was "a city set on a hill, that could not be hid." Indeed, by the constitution of things which God has established throughout nature, nothing is made excellent or beautiful on its own account* or for its own sake; this rule is never departed from. The diamond glitters not for itself,† but for the delight of its possessor. The bright star of the north shines not for itself, but for the direction and benefit of man. The glorious sun—that beautiful and perfect orb of day—diffuses his light and heat on our world; his line goes through all the earth; blessings mark his way; he seems to say, "Not for myself I shine, but for others, and to glorify my maker." These ideas lead us to the true end of Zion's glory. Her various excellences are diffusive; her emblematical, her figurative, and typical glory, were for a time to supply the place of a brighter display, which was to be made by the gospel of Christ, of the grace of the Father through his beloved Son. Zion was the gospel of the Jewish church, not in words, but in places and things; these were their true representatives. When the tribes of Israel went up three times a year to worship at Jerusalem, to present themselves before the Lord at the all-significant and expressive place of the tabernacle of the Most High, they read these tokens of divine grace and favour shining forth from this animated scene. The faithful under that dispensation saw clearly that there was mercy with Jehovah that he might be feared. Else, why a tabernacle of testimony at all? why a high-priest? why these expiatory offerings? why descends the holy fire or the holy cloud? or why rises the "incense to the skies?" Here, seeing and believing, instead of hearing and believing did honour to the divine intentions. Here, "out of Zion," and in this manner, did "God shine." The truth of natural light written by the sun's beams could not be more intelligible. When the sons of Israel returned to their inheritances—their freeholds—they told to those who could not go up to Jerusalem the wonders they saw, and gave the sense of what they saw, that in some wonderful way "mercy and truth had met together, righteousness and peace had embraced each other." Thus from Zion sounded out the praises of the Most High, whose covenant mercies exhibited the way of reconciliation between God and man through a mediator, typified to them in the person and office of the high-priest.

2.) But did not God in his glorious character as the Lord of the whole earth, and as the Lord God merciful and gracious, shine forth from Zion beyond the narrow precincts of Judea? or was not the heathen world materially benefited by the light of Israel? Certainly not so fully as in after times; yet, in a good degree, "the Lord made known his salvation; his righteousness he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He remembered his mercy and truth towards the house of Israel, and the ends of the earth saw the salvation of our God" (Ps. xcvi. 2, 3); and some, we now know, were made partakers of saving grace who were not of Israel's tribes; such were Rahab, Ruth, the widow of Sarepta, Hiram king of Tyre, Abedmelec, and the queen of Sheba. The fame of Zion shone forth in its strength. It is well known that all the wise men, philosophers, and statesmen of ancient times traversed the earth for knowledge. Now God did so order it that Judea was a very suitable centre of the

* The more general truth, that *nothing is created without some wise purpose*, is beautifully illustrated in the case of the squirrel. It is a singular but well-authenticated circumstance that most of those oaks which are called spontaneous are planted by this animal, in which way he has performed the most essential service to mankind, and particularly to the inhabitants of England. It is related in some English work that a gentleman walking one day in the woods belonging to the Duke of Beaufort, near Troy House, in the county of Monmouth, his attention was diverted by a squirrel, which sat very composedly on the ground. He stopped to observe his motions. In a few moments the squirrel darted to the top of the tree beneath which he had been sitting. In an instant he was down with an acorn in his mouth, and after digging a small hole he stooped down and deposited the acorn; then covering it, he darted up the tree again. In a moment he was down again with another, which he buried in the same manner. This he continued to do as long as the observer thought proper to watch him. This industry of the little animal is directed to the purpose of securing him against want in the winter, and it is probable that his memory is not sufficiently retentive to enable him to remember the spot in which he deposited every acorn. This industrious little fellow, no doubt, loses a few every year; these few spring up, and are destined to supply the place of the parent tree. Thus is Britain in some measure indebted to the industry and bad memory of a squirrel for her pride, her glory, and her very existence.

† The diamond has this singularity, that it emits rays of light in the darkest situations, by which the true is known from the false.

then civilized world. There were from Judea, both by sea and land, the best kinds of facilities for communication; nay, the very wars in which the Israelites were engaged indirectly made known the God of Israel. And, though the Israelites were either envied or hated by other nations, yet God so ordered or overruled it that their prophets were regarded by the nations as an order of men who, as it were, had no country, who spoke in the name of God to all nations. This is a point of very easy proof. Here then was a most excellent medium of communication for these prophets. They were every one (Balaam excepted) of the Israelitish nation; and hence we easily see how Christ should be "the desire of all nations." We know that the writings of the prophets were known among the heathen. Nebuchadnezzar had heard of and well understood the writings of Jeremiah (Jer. xxxix. 11, &c.), which procured favour to that prophet. It is clear that Alexander the Great knew of the prophecies of Daniel. It is certain that, by the vicinity of Tyre to Judea, the Tyrians who were the universal navigators of those times, could communicate the knowledge of the Israelites far and near. It is evident that every Israelitish captive transported to Assyria, Chaldea, or elsewhere, carried with him the knowledge of the true God. It is most certain that the Jewish scriptures were known as far as the Greek language extended, being translated by order of Ptolemy into the Greek tongue, though some affect to dispute it. Bishop Horsley seems to be of the same opinion. He says that "the posterity of Jacob, for the general good of all mankind, were appointed to be for a certain period the depositaries of true religion, and the objects of miraculous discipline. Their intercourse was maintained in various ways at different periods: by conquest or by commerce, by alliance or by servitude, with the principal empires and most enlightened nations of the world; in the earliest times with the Moabites, the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, and the Syrians of Damascus; afterwards with the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians; and then with the Greeks; and lastly with the Romans. The intercourse of the Israelites, in every period of their state, with the people that were the most considerable for the time, was the means of keeping alive some knowledge of the true God even among the heathen, in such a degree at least as might prepare the world for a general revelation at the appointed season. They were, as some of their own rabbies have very well expressed it, the witnesses of the one true God to all mankind. In this sense Jacob was appointed for the congregations, or for the teacher of the people; his posterity was a race of priests, a nation of prophets."*

Such was the opinion of this learned man, and history and common sense concur in supporting it; nay, there is no doubt that Plato's most sublime notions of the Deity were imported from Mount Zion, though not acknowledged; but indeed the great men of antiquity were not in the habit of saying whence they derived their wisdom. Taking such a view of things we can explain or reconcile scripture with itself; hence those impassioned exhortations which we meet with in the Psalmist's addresses to the heathen, to praise God on account of his greatness, his majesty, his goodness; and on account of the just claims which God had upon their reverence and obedience, Ps. xxii. 27; lxxii. 18, 19; cxvii., &c. Hence also we account for the wise men from the east coming to worship Christ, &c.

In all these several ways, respectively and collectively, we have evidence, as to the ages to which they refer, "that out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God did shine," and that most gloriously. It was the pride of Greece that from her shone forth the rays of philosophy, of poetry, of sculpture, &c. We give her credit for these; but truth compels us to add that from her also the shame of her filthy and contemptible deities issued; while from Zion shone forth the perfections of Jehovah—the perfection of ordinances which he condescended to appoint as a pattern and a rule to all nations, and the emblems of a brighter economy that was about to be published from the same centre and from the same Jehovah. What a melancholy reflection is it that then, as afterwards in our Saviour's time, light came into the world, but both Jew and Gentile loved darkness rather than light! We now proceed to consider the text—

II. In reference to its evangelical import.

We are authorized to consider the present gospel church as the antitype of ancient Zion, Heb. xii. 22–24. The correspondence will be found remarkably correct if duly traced. It is true the visible glory of Israel has departed; those shadows of good things are no more to be seen. These symbols never were absolutely necessary. God would have been the same to Israel without them; but they were for a time given, and then removed as being no longer of any use. So now, when faith is called into exercise

* See Horsley, vol. ii., p. 311, &c.

in reference to the gospel church, it will be acknowledged that Zion of old "had no glory by reason of the glory that excelled." There was nothing in the Jewish economy (which had its seat on Mount Zion) that could make the worshippers or "the comers thereunto perfect." A very great advance, indeed, had been made towards perfection; and faith in that economy, was saving, if it had respect unto the coming of the Messiah; but now Christ, the substance of all the types, having come, those types were removed. "Christ having purchased for himself a glorious church;" having taken this church under his own immediate protection, having endowed it with spiritual gifts, rights, and immunities; having clothed it with his own spotless righteousness; having given his saints a bond of union, not only to himself, but to one another, whereby they become "terrible as an army with banners," of which he is sole captain and chief—it is now from this church, the spiritual Zion, that the glory of our Redeemer God is to shine on a benighted world. The constitution of the church is changed; but "grace reigns" more triumphantly than ever, "through righteousness, unto eternal life." Every thing that was signified by the tabernacle, its service and priesthood remains. "Grace and truth," which the former economy portrayed, are established for ever. The shadows have vanished, but the substance we have in possession. The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, has shown us the accomplishment of the types in Christ, in every particular, and to him we must refer. The tabernacle, Mount Zion itself, the kingly power vested in David, are all fulfilled in Christ. The people of the Israelitish nation, for whose benefit these establishments were raised, and who constituted the church in those days, were typical of true believers under the gospel, who, by faith place themselves under the dominion of Christ, to whose voice they listen, whose commands they cheerfully obey; so that, at the present time, Christ and his church constitute what the Psalmist designates "*the perfection of beauty*." The divine perfections, which had formerly rested on Zion, shone forth in the person of Christ, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" while all his spiritual followers stand complete in him.

As Zion anciently formed a centre whence the divine communications issued forth, so the church is constituted the light of the world, and forms the depository of the gospel, from which, "its sound shall go forth through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world." The gospel is to be diffused in all directions, to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south, throughout all varieties of darkness and wickedness, so that upon all those "who sit in the region and shadow of death" shall this light arise.

From this view of the subject several general observations present themselves:—

1. The design of God our Saviour is nothing less than the full display of the glory of redemption, and the universal diffusion of its blessings over the earth. The ultimate effects of the mysterious transactions on Calvary are not to be confined to the narrow limits within which they have hitherto been found. Jehovah has declared his design "to reconcile the world to himself," to give unto his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," and to secure the eternal felicity of a number as the stars of heaven, "which no man can number, out of every nation, and tongue, and people." The "Sun of righteousness will arise" upon the nations "with healing under his wings." "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same his name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense and a pure offering shall ascend;" idolatry shall be subverted, and the kingdom of darkness shall be utterly overthrown, seeing that "for this end the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

2. The church of God is the instrumental medium by which this shall be accomplished. The world previously to the advent of Christ had not a ray of saving light but what issued from Zion: not that this was a matter of necessity, for God might have enlightened them by other means, but such was not the Lord's will; and, as to our times, it is equally true that God could have accomplished his purpose in the salvation of millions and hundreds of millions by such a call and by such communications as he made to Abram, when he "called him alone and blessed him" (Isa. li. 2); but our God and Saviour is pleased to put this honour upon his church, to make the church the means of its own increase. It was designed that persons once sinners, in their real character, should, after they had been benefitted by the doctrines of the cross, preach the doctrines of the cross to their fellow-men. What could be more gracious than this—thus to throw a reward in our way and strew pleasure in our path, thus to accept our feeble efforts and permit us to share in the final triumphs of the cross?

3. The disciples of Christ are universally bound to assist in transmitting the light

of the gospel to a benighted world. We are not merely permitted, but are imperatively required, to co-operate in this work. Justice to our fellow-men, as well as gratitude to him who hath called us out of darkness, demands our exertions. The language of Paul is as applicable to Christian ministers and Christian churches as it was to himself: "We are debtors both to the Jew and the Greek; necessity is laid upon us, and woe be to us if we labour not to make known the gospel of Christ." The gospel must be considered, not only as a treasure by which we are enriched, but also as a trust committed to us for the benefit of the world. This is a work in which Christians in general are required to engage; the obligation is as universal as it is imperative. All are not called nor qualified to devote themselves to the work of the ministry at home, or to that of missionaries abroad; but there is employment in various ways to call forth the energies of all. There must be no by-standers. All and every kind of talent must be put in requisition; spiritual gifts, natural talents, property, diligence, zeal, courage, unanimity, perseverance, must be employed. Every sail must be set, every breeze watched, and every opportunity embraced. Christians must rouse every one his neighbour and encourage every one his fellow; and those who cannot promote the cause in any other way than by wrestling with God in prayer for his blessing on more active agents will not be considered the least efficient instruments. Let but the love of Christ be felt in its constraining power, and we shall be at no loss for opportunities and means of making the glory of the Saviour known, and aiding in the extension of his kingdom. Those who excuse themselves from taking part, nay, from co-operating to the full extent of their ability, would do well to ponder what that meaneth: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth," and to consider whether the curse pronounced in ancient days on the inhabitants of Meroz may not justly be extended to them: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Every tie that binds us to the Saviour, every bond that unites us to our fellow sinners, every feeling that is in correspondence with our character, our privileges, and our expectations as Christians, combine to urge us forward, till God shall shine forth gloriously out of Zion, and the "earth be filled with the knowledge of his glory as the waters cover the sea."

4. The most ample encouragement is afforded to stimulate the exertions of the church. The church of Christ, collectively and individually, has been too despairing of her cause, and too fearful of her strength and ability for the work, too much like Moses when selected to go to Pharaoh—"Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send:" rather any other than myself. But he was assured that he should have all suitable helps and abilities; and the event proved the faithfulness of God in these assurances. Let none, then, despair of gracious helps in this cause. It is the Lord's work, given to his church and to every individual in it to perform, and he will certainly prosper it.

1.) Reflect on the promises of God. "I will help thee, yea, I will strengthen thee, with the right hand of my righteousness." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and you men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains (of opposition) and make them small and like to chaff." This, my brethren, is nothing less than a full promise, in figurative language, of a most complete conquest of, and triumph over, superstition and every species of false religion, as well as over every work of darkness. And, further, as the great work cannot be accomplished all at once, though it should not be completed even unto the end of the world, Christ says to his church, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And this also is an intimation, that the work is never to cease "until all the ends of the earth shall have seen the salvation of our God," that generation of Christians must labour after the example of the past, and that no age must be slack or remiss in its exertions.

2.) Consider also the universal adaptation and intrinsic energy of the gospel. Christ's word is a mighty word: "The Lord shall send forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, whereby the people shall be made willing in the day of his power." The rod of Moses was mighty; but mightier still is that of Jesus. His word is a "sharp sword, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword;" it is the sword of the Spirit. See what a single individual did, who was born at Tarsus and converted while going to Damascus; he measured the Roman empire, and fixed the standard of the cross in the proud city of Rome: and has the gospel which Paul preached diminished in its force? Is it not in the present day, and shall it not continue to be, the power of God unto salvation?

3.) The agency of the divine Spirit is another source of encouragement. If you were called to engage in any department of this work in your own strength, or left to your own resources, there might be room for despondency. But we have the most ample agency in the divine Spirit's work; and if Jesus be with you by his Spirit, who is omnipotent and omniscient, you cannot fail. Was the Lord with the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple? ("I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts," Hag. ii. 4, 5,) and will he not be with you? Remember that his arm is not shortened that he cannot save; he has "a mighty arm; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand"—high as the throne of heaven and mighty as omnipotence itself. We may add,

4.) The evident tokens of an approaching conquest over the prejudices and delusions of mankind. In some past ages the church might, in despondency, have concluded that God was slack concerning his promises, might be saying "Lord, how long?" but the church in this age has revived hopes; we are now blessed with many clear indications that God is remembering his mercy promised to our forefathers. Yes, we feel assured that, though the advance of the gospel is yet but slow, nevertheless it is actually advancing with majesty and power. The mists of ignorance and prejudice begin to disperse. The excellency and glory of Christ's work of redemption become visible in many parts of the earth which lately were dark as night. Difficulties of a worldly nature, which formerly appeared insurmountable, are vanishing before our great Zerubbabel; crooked things are evidently becoming straight, and rough places plain, to afford facilities for the introduction of that period when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," as the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.

O Holy Spirit, breathe upon the nations that they may live, that they may rise up an exceedingly great army, to the glory of God our Saviour. O Sun of righteousness! arise with healing under thy wings, to heal the sickly nations. O Father of Mercies! fulfil thy gracious promise, give to thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. "Out of Zion (spiritual Zion), the perfection of beauty," shine forth in the majesty of truth and love, till all the ends of the earth behold thy glory and salvation.

I have extended this example beyond what may seem necessary for the illustration of our Topic, because it has afforded me an opportunity of throwing out some hints adapted to animate you to increased exertion, and to encourage you amidst the difficulties you may be called to encounter, as well as to suggest some thoughts on a subject which will often come before you, particularly in relation to missionary institutions. Mr. Harris, in his "Witnessing Church," has greatly amplified the subject of the last four pages, and that with all the strength and eloquence for which his writings are distinguished.

The following is an outline on the Topic, in which the several circumstances of the place form the principal subdivisions.

Sketches of Sermons, vol. ii., p. 4, on Gen. xxviii. 17: "How dreadful is this place! this is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Observe,

I. The place specified. It was,

1. A place distinguished by favourable circumstances. It was a retired spot. Here Jacob rested; here he experienced divine protection; here he presented acceptable worship; and here the presence of God was peculiarly manifested. Such are those places which are consecrated to God's service, and there his presence and blessing may be confidently expected, Exod. xx. 24.

2. A place of sacred instruction. Here the patriarch Jacob was taught the most interesting truths.

1.) By what God exhibited to him.

2.) By what God said to him.

3. A place of covenant engagements, ver. 20, 22.

II. The names given to this place.

1. "The house of God." Such, in a high and important sense, is every place where God is acceptably worshipped; for there his children dwell; there he is present; there his favours are obtained, &c.

2. "The gate of heaven." It is the gate where many enter on the way to heaven, Matt. vii. 13, 14.

III. The reflection suggested by it: "How dreadful (awful) is this place." This teaches us that the worship of God should be attended with habitual seriousness.

1. With serious consideration.
2. With serious watchfulness against distraction.
3. With serious concern for spiritual blessings.
4. With serious intercession in behalf of others.
5. With serious gratitude for benefits received.

Many remember with joy the *place* of their spiritual birth, as suggested by Ps. lxxxvii; 1 Sam. vii. 12.* History and memory stir us up to think on this or that place where God stepped in and saved us from death or calamity. (See Flavel on Divine Providence.)

LECTURE XVI.

TOPICS X. & XI.

PERSONS ADDRESSED, AND THE STATE OF PERSONS ADDRESSED.

A VERY considerable portion of divine instruction was at first elicited by particular circumstances and adapted to the state of the individuals primarily addressed. The applicability of such instruction to men of every age is, consequently, proportioned to the analogy between their state and that of the persons to whom it was first delivered. Hence the value of our tenth and eleventh Topics for the purpose of incidental remark or more extended illustration, as they lead us to notice with discrimination the different shades and varieties of character to which the word of God adapts its instructions.

Having already, under the sixth and seventh Topics, taken occasion to refer somewhat extensively to human agencies, it will not be necessary to extend my observations on the present Topics to any considerable length; and since the eleventh Topic may be considered only as a modification of the tenth, I may conveniently embrace both under one view in the illustrations which I have to offer. In regard to incidental observations, the distinctions between the two cannot be better exhibited than in the examples of Mons. Claude, which are as follow:—

TOPIC X.—CONSIDER THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. "Let us take Rom. xii. 17: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil.' Those to whom Paul addressed these words were Romans, whose perpetual maxim was violently to revenge public injuries (from which we easily infer their way of settling private ones), and totally to destroy those who intended to destroy them, or who had offered them any affronts. Witness the Carthaginians and Corinthians. They totally destroyed Carthage, because the Carthaginians, under Hannibal, had carried their arms into Italy, and had nearly subverted the proud city of Rome itself. Corinth they sacked and burnt, for having affronted their ambassadors. We also remark this particular circumstance, that though the Romans had succeeded in avenging their injuries, and though the empire owed its grandeur to such excesses, yet their success did not hinder the apostle from saying, 'Recompense to no man evil for evil,' because

* See p. 87 on this passage.

neither example nor success ought to be the rule of our conduct, but solely the will of God and the law of Christ."

TOPIC XI.—EXAMINE THE PARTICULAR STATE OF THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. "This may be illustrated from the same passage: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil.' St. Paul writes to Roman Christians, who saw themselves hated and persecuted by their fellow-citizens, and in general abused by the whole world; yet, however reasonable resentment might appear at first sight, the apostle would not have them indulge such a passion as the light of reason, the instinct of nature, and the desire of their own preservation might seem to excite. He exhorted them to leave vengeance to God, and advised them only to follow the impulse of love. The greatest persecutors of the primitive Christians were the Jews, on whom the Roman Christians could easily have avenged themselves under various pretexts, for the Jews were generally hated and despised by the other nations, and nothing could be more easy than to avail themselves of that general hatred to which the religion and manners of the Jews exposed them. Nevertheless St. Paul not only says, in general, 'Render not evil for evil,' but, in particular, 'Recompense to *no man* evil for evil.' As if he had said: Do not injure those on whom you could most easily avenge yourselves; hurt not the most violent enemies of the name and followers of Jesus Christ, not even those who crucified your Saviour and daily strive to subvert his gospel."

The judicious application of these Topics to any subject we may be considering will, I am persuaded, frequently suggest to us valuable observations, enabling us to elucidate passages that may seem obscure,—to reconcile others apparently contradictory,—and to perceive in other passages a beauty or a force not otherwise apparent.

Perhaps I shall not greatly err in considering the language of the prophet, Isa. lv. 1, as affording an illustration of the first of these classes; for, though I am not convinced that there is any thing really obscure in the language, yet good men have certainly differed about its application, and some have been induced to restrict this and similar passages in a manner which a proper attention to our present Topics would have shown them to be unwarranted. The metaphor employed by the prophet is, perhaps, the fittest that could be employed, especially in the east, to denote an intense desire; and it is not, therefore, surprising that the Psalmist should use it to express his desires after God, Ps. lxiii. 1, 2. It is not, however, necessarily restricted to any one class of desires, but may, with the utmost propriety, be used to describe that general desire for happiness which is manifested by the eager pursuit of earthly good. Whether the prophet intended to express this general desire, or whether he used the metaphor in a more restricted sense, can only be determined by considering "the state of the persons addressed." If, therefore, on examination, this state can be accurately ascertained, all obscurity as to the present application of the text is removed. If it be plain that these words were spoken to the Jewish people generally, to the persons whose character is described in the succeeding verses, particularly the second, sixth, and seventh, then we ought not to hesitate in applying them to those in our day who are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Nay, in such case, the text sets before us the model on which our addresses to unconverted sinners should be formed.

Of the second class of passages which our Topic may be applied to eluci-

date we may take as an example the apparent contradiction between the language of Paul and that of James on the subject of Justification, which has given occasion to much angry debate and long-continued controversy. Paul says, "We are justified by faith, without the works of the law;" and again, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." James, after reasoning on the subject, says, "You see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Now, whatever appearance of paradox there may be in the words, we are persuaded there is no opposition in the two statements, and that we have only to consider "the state of the persons respectively addressed" in order to perceive that there is a perfect coincidence of sentiment in the two apostles. It will be seen that those to whom the former wrote were exposed to the influence of Judaizing teachers, who sought to seduce them from the simplicity of the gospel and to remove the foundation of their hope; the apostle, therefore, states in the strongest and most explicit manner the true doctrine of a sinner's justification with God. James wrote to persons whose state required that he should guard them against an opposite error. The pernicious principle of Antinomianism, that "the gospel relieves us from obedience to the law," had even then made its appearance, and "men had turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness." He consequently exposes the delusion of those who rested in a faith which possessed no purifying influence, and he employs an illustration well suited to convey a correct and forcible view of the subject: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Abraham's acceptance with God certainly *preceded* this act of his faith; for he "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," nearly forty years before; and James declares that this scripture was fulfilled (confirmed) by his subsequent conduct—a conduct which proved the existence of that principle of faith which, in all cases, "works by love" and "purifies the heart." From this it is evident that James speaks of the justification of believers, or the means by which their title to the character of believers is justified, and not of the justification of sinners, or the ground on which they stand accepted of God.

Of the third class are the examples of Mons. Claude, and indeed those which I have just mentioned are, in some measure, of this character, inasmuch as a consideration of the persons addressed will show the adaptation and propriety of the apostle's statements and the prophet's exhortation.

If, however, the adaptation of inspired instruction renders it important to notice the persons and the state of the persons originally addressed, it is no less important that we should acquaint ourselves with the state of the persons whom we address, in order that we may adapt our instruction to them; and my design in the remaining observations of the present Lecture is to suggest to you some hints and directions on this subject.

Much valuable knowledge is, no doubt to be obtained from the study of books; but, if we would render our knowledge subservient to the instruction of others, we must study *man*.* The states of men, will, of course, be estimated according to the different aspects under which they are viewed. The geographer views them with reference to the extent, fertility, natural products, &c., of their country, their commerce, manufactures, &c. The

* See Lecture VII. p. 113.

philosopher regards their intellectual capacities, their attainments in literature, arts, and sciences, &c. The politician looks at their numbers, their wealth, the strength of their fortifications, and their capacities for war. But the Christian, with the eye of benevolence and compassion, views the different states of men in relation to their immortal interests. He surveys the world with a spiritual eye, but he cannot be an indifferent spectator; and, when he has taken a survey of the countries around him, he beholds a world lying in wickedness, and commences the benevolent design of implanting the germ of the "tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations."

But, to approach closer to our present undertaking, we may observe that the preacher must take a survey of his flock, in order that he may know their real character and state; and until this is done he has done little to purpose. He must be a complete Christian philosopher; the knowledge of the heart in all its errors and deceits, in all its states and bearings, can alone direct to proper correctives, aids, and consolations; and, if this observation be just, then a minister must not only be a well-read man, "a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," but he must be a wise man also, and possessed of a sound and discriminating judgment. It is worthy of remark that the volume of inspiration, though completed nearly two thousand years ago, furnishes a suitable address for every class of character to be found in the world; and this is not an affair of mere accident, a mere train of undesigned coincidents, but is to be ascribed to the omniscience of God, of him "who sees the end from the beginning," and has the most perfect knowledge of what is in man. "Rightly to divide the word of truth," so as to give to every variety of state and character the portion that belongs to it, must, therefore, require in the preacher a familiar acquaintance both with the Bible and with the people among whom he labours.

It is acknowledged that scripture appears in many instances to consider mankind in two classes only, as Isa. iii. 10, 11: "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with him: *** woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him," &c. Yet under this division each class contains a vast variety of character, which divides, subdivides, and subdivides again, and each of these is further to be considered as affected by different times and circumstances.

The *righteous* comprehends a vast variety of character, such as the strong, the weak, the intelligent, the ignorant, &c. Some are zealous in heart and laborious in effort, and others comparatively slothful or languid. Some have very clear views of the gospel, and live on its comforts; while others "go mourning without the sun." Many are placed in perilous situations through worldly associations—exposed, on one hand, to the allurements of the world, and more or less overcome or entangled by the snares of temptation; or, on the other, to various kinds of persecution. These form only a small part of the great whole; perhaps we might assert that Christians differ as much in the frame of their minds as in their features. How preposterous then must it be to address all these classes without reference to such distinctions, while the scriptures have something particular to say to each, upon which the judicious preacher will expatiate more or less, as occasion requires. To each there is a suitable incitement, or motive, or promise given, which, when discovered and applied, will be felt by the individual, and acknowledged as a message from God; and the preacher who attains any considerable deal of skill in this department of his work, though his

talents in other respects may not be of the highest order, is as much above ordinary preachers as a full-grown man is above a company of boys. Surely this ought to be the object of a preacher's ambition ; and, even if he fail in part, yet by endeavours and perseverance he will in part succeed, and every month's study, as well as every private conversation he holds with his people, will give him an increase of this divine skill.

As to the other grand branch of mankind, called in scripture the wicked, sinners, unrighteous, enemies to God, sons of Belial, unbelievers, hypocrites, &c., (there is no giving one name to them, "for they are many"), it is confessed that on many occasions they may be addressed in general terms, as unconverted, far from God, or strangers. It is highly proper to speak to them generally of the law and the gospel, the threatenings and the promises, the necessity of conversion, and the certainty of a future judgment. If, however, you would come to close quarters with them, and convince them of their individual state, you must subdivide them, and bring forth your distinctions of character ; and, by pointing out God's positive declarations to each one distinctly, you must so hold up the glass of the word that each may see his own likeness. Few are either convinced or offended till you point out their own particular abominations. Distinct charges of sin must, however painful, be made. An "arrow shot at a venture" may pierce a guilty king ; but it is more likely that it may not. You will soon see that this is the scripture method of dealing with sinners. Achan must be charged with his sin of covetousness ; David must be told, "Thou art the man." The whole of our Saviour's conduct to the scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, &c., was of this kind of close dealing. The apostles followed in the footsteps of their Lord. What an example you have in Paul's faithful epistle to the Galatians ; and in Peter's address to the Jews : "Him you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. So Stephen also : "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ?" Indeed, it would be tedious to detail the instances of this kind to be found in scripture.

Should any one say, "Though it is not very difficult to expose open and known sins, yet it is not so easy to trace sins of the heart—that mystery of iniquity which requires omniscience to discover it," to this I reply, Study your own heart ; study the character of sinners as recorded in the word of God ; study the various threatenings against sinners, and in these threatenings the nature of men's sins (for the punishment of sin corresponds with its character, or, as the common observation presents itself, "you read the sin," as to its nature and qualities, "in the punishment") ; especially study mankind as they appear before you. These methods taken together, and in all cases supposing the divine illumination to guide you as teachers of the gospel, you will be able to show to each sinner his "proper form and feature," and, by a divine blessing, arouse the slumbering conscience.

In general it is taken for granted that the chief study of the preacher should be to extract out of the text before him the matter of his theme, and then it is presumed the work is done. Doubtless this is right enough in itself ; yet what in Claude is called "a continued application" to the people should follow, according as their state is judged to be. This is by no means to be neglected, for it is the salt of the sermon ; it is that which gives it its pungency, causing the word to appear "quick and powerful," &c. Heb. iv. 12. It is not brandishing about the sword of the Spirit over the people's heads that will do the preacher's work ; it must be brought into

immediate contact with the heart. The preacher must prick the sinner in the place of his own iniquity ; then it will, by a divine blessing, be found effectual. If the preacher be happily successful thus far, he must then proceed to show that such particular sin is not accidental, but the necessary result of a nature that is wholly corrupt ; and here the sinner is to be led to a universal abhorrence of himself. This is necessary ; for nothing is more common than for men to say, " Yes, I have been faulty in such and such a thing, but yet my heart is good." No peace must be given them till the full acknowledgment comes, " Behold, I am vile."

Perhaps the most difficult character which the preacher has to encounter is the almost Christian. There are some unfavourable indications, which put the minister in great doubt how to address such an individual, and yet other things are favourable. There are haltings and shiftings, and it is difficult to discover whether these are owing to the power of temptation, some sudden surprisal, or to a heart radically unsound. Here a little suspension of judgment may be very proper, agreeably to prophetic language, " not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Time, that great revealer of secrets, will discover the truth. In the mean time, urge such persons, in the language of scripture, to " work out their own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12), to " give diligence to make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10), to " examine themselves whether they be in the faith," &c.

There are yet other ideas attached to this subject regarding the persons and states of those that are addressed ; as, for instance, whether you are a forerunner or a follower, whether you are carrying the gospel to a people as " some new thing"—I mean new to them, or whether the people can be supposed to know the gospel. If the former, then the obvious course is to dwell on the scriptural representations of the fallen state of man as corroborated by the voice of conscience and the universal testimony of fact, and to unfold the way of recovery which infinite mercy has provided, the method which has been very successful in all ages under such circumstances, particularly in the great revival under Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitfield, and their coadjutors and contemporaries—the same method, in fact, that St. Paul used, " to preach repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," adding likewise your best efforts to overthrow all their false dependencies, their radical errors, and to establish them in the true doctrines of the gospel. Clear explication, solid truth, sound argument, delivered with fervent zeal and an ardent love to the souls of men, must not be wanting, if you would approve yourselves workmen that need not be ashamed.

Due regard must also be paid to the state of the people as to their worldly circumstances, so as not to urge obligations upon the poor which belong only to the rich, nor speak to the rich as the subjects of privation and wretchedness. I have heard preachers, when addressing a company of poor people, who could obtain little more than bread and water, inveigh vehemently against covetousness, pride, and luxury ; others, when preaching to opulent persons, have expatiated on the duties of contentment and resignation, and totally neglected to describe the danger of riches and the guilt of vanity and pride. The state of the people ought to suggest the text and the mode of treating it ; while prudence and faithfulness should direct the mind of the preacher.

A well-informed people may likewise have considerations and arguments addressed to them which would by no means suit the illiterate, to whom you must use great plainness of speech that cannot be misunderstood. Nor must you disregard the distinction upon which the apostle John so much dwells in his writings, viz., that of babes, young men, and fathers. The state of these is very different, and requires a different address. The separation of character, the "precious and the vile" of every shade, is necessary to faithfulness, one of the first requisites in a minister. To be faithful, therefore, you must be bold, judicious, discriminating, fearless of consequences, leaving these to God. Let it not be urged that this is the proper work of aged ministers, of persons of extensive experience: it is the work of all, of each and every one of Christ's servants. It is a main part of his business; therefore, relax not till you have attained considerable proficiency. Allow the subject your most sober reflections, and pursue these till you come to a fair decision. Advert to your own experience, as a hearer—when were you ever profited by a loose, unapplied sermon, however ingenious it might be, however full of other excellences? If you have ever been affected, has it not been when the preacher has touched your own particular case, when he has spoken to your heart (as the Hebrew phrase is), when he has, so to speak, singled you out, has described your real state, your wants, your feelings, your experience, or when he has applied some word of scripture to your spiritual necessities? Now if this affected you, and yielded both profit and pleasure, why will not the same course in your hands produce similar effects? Is any thing so likely to make you regarded as a spiritual father, an able counsellor, "a messenger, one of a thousand?" Here you will touch those moveable strings of the heart which all orators aim to affect, and, by a "word in season," you will do more than by any elaborate disquisition and studied discourse pointed only to the understanding or the reason of the hearers. Permit me to add that you must not only consider the state of the people you are called to address, but also impress upon them the necessity of duly considering their own state. Our favourite, Walker, on the text Gal. vi. 4, "Let every man prove his own work," makes this the whole subject of his discourse. If any soul was lost who attended his ministry, he was clear of his blood; if any went to the place of punishment from his ministry, it was truly with their eyes open.

Your object in the Christian ministry is twofold, the building up of saints in their most holy faith, and the calling of sinners to the knowledge of the truth. With regard to the latter, there is no doubt but the call, to answer its professed purpose, must be a general call, and an open door, because the Lord's people yet uncalled are among the world lying in the wicked one. So Paul the apostle was commanded to continue preaching the word at Corinth, and this was the reason given him, "for I have much people in this city." But there is also another motive for preaching the gospel to sinners, that the truth has a restraining power;* it is only in a

* It has very properly found a place amongst the evidences of Christianity that even where saving conversions are not effected there is a very considerable amelioration to be observed. It is only necessary to make the comparison between a people enlightened so far as to understand moral virtue in its purest forms, social life in its fairest examples, the rights of nations directed by enlightened policy, and a people still strangers to such refinement. If the gospel in its lowest effects can conduce so much to the happiness of the world, what may we not conclude with regard to the gospel received into the heart?

few cases that it can be wholly resisted. The gospel excites and encourages good acts, and may produce some moral effects even where it is not savingly known. It is said of Herod that "he heard John gladly, and did many things," and, had it not been for the influence of the lascivious Herodias, he might have been still further improved: but in him we have a melancholy instance of the incalculable evils of an unlawful connexion. However, it is to me as clear as the sun that a general gospel is a general good. Jehovah's sovereignty in regard to real conversions is quite another matter. "The day (of more perfect discovery) will declare it." Against a positive command, "Preach the gospel to every creature," no doctrine is to be pleaded in bar. Our duty is to obey the command, leaving it to God to regulate matters with regard to the doctrine as it pleases him.

I now proceed to offer you some examples of discourses that have respect to the characters and states of persons to be addressed.

Simeon on Matt. xiii. The parable of the sower. The parable describes,

I. The way-side hearers. These hear the word without understanding it and lose it without regret.

II. The stony-ground hearers. These hear the word gladly, but renounce it speedily.

III. The thorny-ground hearers. These maintain their religious character to the end, but the fruit they bear is of a very imperfect kind, or it never comes to maturity.

IV. The good-ground hearers. These receive the word with humility, and improve it with diligence. But in this class there are minor divisions: some bear fruit thirty-fold, others sixty, and others again a hundred-fold.

Simeon on Matt. xiii. 52. The scribe well instructed,

It is of importance to all, but especially to those who are to teach others, that they understand clearly the doctrines of the gospel. An ignorant minister, like a leaky vessel, disappoints those who expect from him instruction and consolation. But a well-instructed scribe or minister resembles a house-keeper or steward, who, having made provision for the family, feeds them to the full. With this comparison our Lord encourages his attentive and diligent disciples.

The resemblance of every such minister to a householder may be traced as follows:—

I. He is provided with all things necessary for the family over which he is placed.

1. He makes himself acquainted with all their wants.

2. He lays up in store against the time of need. The scriptures being the grand repository of sacred knowledge, he there finds things new and old. What he daily feels, hears, or sees, suitable to the state of his family, he also treasures up.

II. In prosecuting his work he dispenses seasonably to all according to their respective wants.

1. He gives an agreeable variety to a variety of characters, according to their standing, acquisitions, or wants.

1.) To those whose growth in grace enables them to digest strong meat he unfolds the sublime doctrines of revelation.

2.) To those who can only feed on milk he treats of the simple doctrine of the cross of Christ.

2. He discriminates between that which is bad and that which is good in each class, &c. He gives the cup of consolation to the drooping or broken-hearted penitent, but holds forth the waters of jealousy to those who are of a suspicious character, &c.

This discourse is in fact rather a direction to ministers than a pattern of a discourse *ad populum*; but it serves to strengthen the points which I have urged upon your attention in this Lecture, and which will be further corroborated by your careful study of the letters to the seven churches of Asia, in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation. There you will perceive with what wonderful precision the character and state is

marked ; and, as Mr. Scott observes, "the word of Christ to them will always be suitable to the case of other churches and professors of Christianity in all ages and places to the end of the world."

The same author on Gen. vi. 5 : "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Consider,

I. The general declaration with respect to man's state before the flood. The disposition of his heart was evil—

1. Without exception—"every imagination."

2. Without mixture—"only evil."

3. Without intermission—"continually."

II. The general application of this truth to mankind in every age.

This to a tolerably furnished preacher will be very easy to fill up. Alas ! we have too much evidence of this truth ; and, if there be any difficulty, it will be in selecting from the great mass that lies before us.

Mr. Wesley, on John xvi. 22 : "You now have sorrow." The text is not in this case material ; five hundred scriptures would have given a motto. Mr. Wesley's is no more than this ; but the subject is the state of the Christian in trouble of mind.

The persons whose state is to be considered have a right to the tenderest compassion ; they labour under an evil and sore disease, though one that is not commonly understood, and for this reason it is more difficult for them to find a remedy. Being in darkness themselves, they cannot be supposed to understand the nature of their own disorder. And few of their brethren, nay, perhaps of their teachers, know either what their sickness is or how to heal it. So much the more need there is to enquire, First, What is the nature of this disease ? Secondly, What is its cause ? and, Thirdly, What is its cure ?

I. What is the nature of this disease into which so many fall, after they have believed ? wherein doth it properly consist ? and what are its genuine symptoms ? It consists in—

1. The loss of faith, that satisfactory conviction of "things not seen" which they once enjoyed, &c. Hence,

2. The loss of love, which cannot but rise and fall at the same time, and in the same proportion, with true, living faith. Deprived of their faith, they are deprived of their love also.

3. In consequence of the loss of faith and love, the loss of holy joy follows. The Spirit does not bear witness to them as formerly, and they "mourn without the sun."

4. With the loss of faith, and love, and joy, there follows loss of peace, which once "passed all understanding." That sweet tranquillity of mind, that composure of spirit, is gone ; painful doubts return—doubts as to the past, fears as to the future, &c.

5. With the loss of all these follows the loss of power. We know that every one who has peace with God through Jesus Christ, has power over sin ; while that peace remained, power also remained, even over "the besetting sin," whether it were the sin of his nature or constitution, the sin of his education, or that of his profession, yea, over those evil tempers and desires which till then he could not overcome ; but now the dominion is greatly lost ; the crown has fallen from his head ; he is under a usurpation, &c.

II. This may be called a wilderness state, and its nature will be further understood by enquiring into its causes.

1. I dare not rank among these the sovereign will of God ; for "he rejoices in the prosperity of his servants." Therefore I must conclude that God never deserts us, as some speak ; it is only we that desert him.

2. The most usual cause is sin of one kind or another.

1.) Sins of commission, such as scripture shows that God's people have often fallen into, and which daily observation and experience confirm.

2.) Sins of omission ; these do not perhaps immediately "quench the Spirit," but slowly and gradually. Sins of commission may be compared to throwing water upon a fire ; sins of omission to withholding fuel from it. (1.) Perhaps no sin of omission more frequently occasions this than the neglect of private prayer, the want of which

cannot be supplied by any other ordinance. (2.) This may be occasioned by a want of faithfulness in warning our frail fellow-creatures of their danger, Lev. xix. 17. A fault of this nature is very offensive to God.

3. A third cause may be found in our indulging spiritual sins in our hearts ; as,

1.) Pride : "He that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." We may indulge pride as to our talents, our property, our high name, our religious character ; in short, we may be proud even of our humility.

2.) Anger, or jealousy. Anger may be just or lawful to a certain degree, but beyond this it is sinful. We may be sinfully jealous of a supposed rival, of the success that attends any of our brethren, &c.

3.) Any cherished desires that are contrary to that self-denying temper which Christ enjoins, a state of mind contrary to contentedness with that condition which the wisdom of Providence has allotted to us, in short, every disorder of our passions and appetites, exposes us to this darkness.

III. The cure.

On this part of the subject Mr. Wesley has a very long article : but, having extracted so much already, I dare not follow him. In general it may be observed the cure must be dictated by the nature of the wrong. I know but of one course which the scriptures warrant under these circumstances, and that is to come afresh to the blood of Christ, by faith—to that "fountain open for sin and uncleanness." We must say, with the church of old, "I will wait upon the Lord who hideth his face, and I will look for him."

The whole of Mr. Wesley's sermon is excellent, but his text is not well chosen, and he allows not that any one may be in heaviness for the trial of his faith, which I judge was the case with the patriarch Job ; and even Peter's supposed case confirms the possibility. See 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

LECTURE XVII.

TOPIC XII.

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES OF A WORD OR ACTION.

HOWEVER solicitous a commentator on Claude may be to preserve a separate and distinct service to each of his Topics, yet some of them have so close a correspondence, in various points, that it is not a little difficult to avoid confounding them together. Like the colours of the iris, they so unite and blend into each other as almost to defy any very precise discrimination of their respective limits. This is particularly the case in reference to the Topic which now comes to be considered. The principles of a word or action fall, in some measure, under the fifth Topic, "Things implied ;" but if there are some points in which they meet, and in which the one appears to be merged in the other, there are other points in which they differ so materially as to demand for each a separate consideration. Implication obviously includes many things which are very different from principles, as you will see by consulting Lecture XIII. ; on the other hand it may frequently be necessary to recur to principles when they cannot with propriety be treated as things implied in the text. The Topic "Principles" has likewise an affinity with the nineteenth, "Grounds and Causes." Mr. Robinson evidently confounds them together ; for, in commenting on the *nineteenth* Topic, he says, "Principles (12th) are sometimes best urged by implication" (5th) ! Even Claude himself preserves not on this Topic his accustomed precision, as will appear on a careful examination of his illustrations, which are as follow :—

"For example, John v. 14 : 'Behold, thou art made whole ; sin no more,

lest a worse thing come unto thee.' This was the language of Jesus Christ to the man whom he had just before healed of an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing. Him Jesus now found in the temple. It is not imaginable that this meeting was fortuitous and unforeseen to Jesus Christ : his providence, no doubt, conducted the man that way and directed him to the temple, whither he himself went to seek him. Examine, then, upon what *principles* Jesus Christ went to seek this miserable sinner, and you will find, 1. He went in great *love* to the poor man ; he went in that same benevolence which inclined him to do good to all who had need, and in every place that he honoured with his presence. Jesus was, as it were, a public source of benefits ; his hands every where bestowed beneficent gifts, and he even sought occasions when they did not present themselves. 2. He went by an engagement of *ancient* love, which he had made on behalf of this paralytic : his second favour flowed from his first, nor would he leave his work imperfect. Thus it is said, in regard to his disciples, 'Having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them to the end.' The bounty of Jesus Christ resembles that of his eternal Father, who calls, justifies, and in the end glorifies, those whom he first predestinated ; and on this, as on one of the principal foundations, St. Paul establishes our hope for the future : 'God having begun a good work in us will perform it to the day of Christ ;' and elsewhere, 'God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son.' 3. It was by a principle of *wisdom* and foreknowledge that Jesus Christ sought this paralytic patient in the temple, in order to teach him his duty, to furnish him with the means of doing it, and to give him a more particular knowledge of the friend who had healed him ; for he well knew that a tender faith, such as this man's was, had need of fresh and continual aid, as a young plant needs a prop to support it against winds and storms.

"In like manner, if you had to examine these words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman, 'Go and call thy husband' (John iv. 16), you might examine the *intention* of Jesus Christ in this expression. He did not speak thus because he was ignorant what sort of a life this woman lived ; he knew that, to speak properly, she had no husband. It was then, 1. A word of *trial* ; for the Lord said this to give her an opportunity of making a free confession, 'I have no husband.' 2. It was also a word of *kind reproof* ; for he intended to convince her of the sin in which she lived. 3. It was also a word of *grace* ; for the censure tended to the woman's consolation. 4. It was, further, a word of *wisdom* : for our Lord intended to take occasion at this meeting to discover himself to her, and more clearly to convince her that he had a perfect knowledge of all the secrets of her life ; as he presently proved, by saying, 'Thou hast well said, I have no husband ; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.'

"Were you going to explain the ninth verse of the first of Acts, where it is said, 'When Jesus was taken up his disciples beheld him,' it would be proper to remark the sentiments of the disciples in that moment, and to show from what principles proceeded that attentive and earnest looking after their divine Master, while he ascended to heaven."

You will perceive that, in his second example, Claude abandons the term principle for that of *intention*, and proceeds to illustrate, not the principles of the text quoted, but the intention of our Saviour in his address to the

woman of Samaria, thus confounding our present Topic with the fourteenth, "The end proposed."

After these interchanges—which must I think have confused many a student—if we should here so far succeed as to assign to our Topic a distinct and valuable province, calculated to promote variety in the elucidation and enforcement of divine truth, a practical benefit will be secured, and so far the object of the Lecture will be attained.

The word principle, which is undoubtedly derived from *principium*—the beginning, signifies the element of some given truth, the source or origin of any thing. It is sometimes defined in the schools to be that from which any thing is done or known, or, in their own words, "*Unde aliquid est fit aut cognoscetur*," that is, the principles of a word or action lead us to something out of which such a word or action had its rise, or in consequence of which it was so said or done, and on the truth of which the justness or propriety of the word or action turns. Thus, for instance, we are accustomed to observe that the scriptures proceed throughout upon this principle, that man is a degraded, ignorant, and guilty being. This, as you will have frequent occasion to remark, is assumed in all its doctrines, precepts, covenants, and promises, because they would otherwise possess neither importance nor meaning, being applicable only to fallen creatures.

Now doctrines are laid down by some one; precepts are enjoined by some authority; but principle lies in the thing itself, and can be discovered only by close reflection. On the first reading of a text, such principle, though calculated to throw much light on the text or subject, may not be obvious. However, it is the duty of every preacher to study his text with labour and patience, examining its connexion, and endeavouring to ascertain the precise meaning of the words which the Holy Ghost has taught. The old saying is here appropriate: *Veritas in puteo*. Sometimes the well is deep, and, if our contemplations do not give length enough to the bucket-chain, we shall not reach the water, but must get some one else to reach it for us, a method by no means the most creditable. Even when we have satisfactorily ascertained the meaning of a text, we may still trace it back to its elementary principles, in order to elicit such observations as may be adapted to place the subject in a clearer or in a stronger light.

"That there are such things as principles," says Mr. Howe, "is beyond all doubt. There is nothing, no created thing, but has its principles: principles of being there are belonging to it. Every complete substance that exists in the world, and is a created one, must be supposed to have such principles, the principles from which it did proceed and principles of which it does consist. There are also principles of knowledge as well as of being. There is no piece of knowledge, no sort of science, but has its principles, as you all know; and therefore religion, Christian religion—theology, Christian theology—must have its principles too. It is a science, a practical one, and of most absolute and universal necessity; and its principles must therefore be supposed of the most absolute and universal necessity too."

If the mathematician, by tracing back the steps of his demonstration to certain axioms and first principles, proves that the conclusions at which he had arrived are just and accurate, why may we not expect that a frequent recurrence to elementary principles on the part of the Christian minister will answer a similar purpose. Here, however, it is proper to observe that we do not examine the principles of a text as we do the arguments and de-

clarations of men, to see whether what is recorded or declared be true or false : our aim is simply to render its meaning more apparent and luminous, to show the reasonableness or excellency of that which is certainly true ; for no proposition can be more self-evident than this, that whatever God has revealed must of necessity be free from error. When therefore any thing is declared the justice or the excellency of which, from the omission of those circumstances in which it originated, is not at first apparent, we in this case trace back our enquiry to the principle on which the declaration turns, till we discover such considerations as may be adapted to illustrate the subject of our enquiry. Thus, with regard to the moral law, we may argue from our Topic to convince those who suppose "that its claims are abrogated by the gospel, and that when believers are declared to be not under the law, but under grace, it is the intention of the Holy Ghost to affirm, not only that they are redeemed from the curse of the law, but that it no longer has any claim upon them, that it ceases to be a rule of life." Whatever part of the law we contemplate, it requires very little argument to prove that it stands not on the basis of merely arbitrary appointment, like the ceremonial law, which was temporary, and passed away when the ends for which it was given had been accomplished. All the requirements of the moral law may be traced back to the original law of our being, by which we should have been bound even though no written law had ever been given, and from which nothing can ever release us. Hence our blessed Lord himself, in his memorable reply to the lawyer who sought to ensnare him, traces the law to its original principles, and declares that the substance of the law was comprehended in love to God and love to man, to which we were evidently bound by the law of our creation.

In the same manner, if the preacher were desirous of convincing his audience of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, upon the authority of the law of God and its denunciations against every offender (Gal. iii. 10), he might revert to such first principles as love to God, &c., and comment upon them, showing that nothing but confusion could result from the breach of such primordial principles, and that the sanctions of the law are absolutely necessary for the best interests of man. Thus we may argue to silence all the presumptuous declarations of a sinful world, and expose the deformity and turpitude of its practices, which, unless pardoned through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, will eventually be followed by shame and everlasting contempt.*

It may be further observed that under the term *principle* we include things somewhat less certain than those first principles of religious truth to which we have just adverted, but which nevertheless are common property, and deserve the attention of the gospel minister, as well as that of the senator or the barrister, so far as they may afford profitable items of remark, comment, or illustration. Bishop Wilkins observes, on this subject, "Such kinds of notions as are general to mankind, and not confined to any particular sect, or nation, or time, are usually styled common notions, seminal principles, and such as the Romans called *lex nata*." We have an immense

* Thus a direct act of faith in Christ is the true principle of our security, and by this alone can we be justified, not because faith is the root of all virtues, but because it lays hold on Christ, for whose sake alone we are accepted, whatever be the amount of our renovation, which indeed must necessarily follow, but is not the thing that gives peace to the conscience. See *Bickersteth* on the Doctrines of the Reformers.

supply of what are called maxims or proverbs. Those of holy writ may generally be traced either to experience or to some original principle; though some of them stand upon authority alone, which indeed is quite adequate to their support. Of those which are purely human, many were originally invented to apologize for error, or for some carnal policy, and can hardly be admitted to come under the bishop's definition, however generally they may have been received. A notion is not of course to be considered as necessarily true merely because it is commonly admitted. So far as it has reference to reason, conscience, experience, or our natural senses, truth will, however be generally in its favour; and all the feelings of uncorrupted nature—as consciousness of right and wrong, recognition of a Supreme Governor of the world and of the duty we owe to him—may be appealed to as original principles; thus the apostle clearly appeals in Rom. i. 20, and ii. 14, 15.

It is not surprising that an arm so strong should too often be seized by the adversary, or at least that a pretence of adverting to first principles should be made by designing, deluded creatures for the subversion of truth. Here, then, we are led to the consideration of *false principles*: and I fear the volume of false principles would be found much more bulky than that of the true. It will therefore be the preacher's business to expose and refute false principles (see Lecture VIII.) as well as to establish such as are true.

In this view an example of judicious observation, on our Topic, may be quoted from Bishop Horsley, by which it appears that he thought it right to examine the erroneous principles of ancient philosophy, and to correct them by stating such as are true.

"It has been said that Nature does nothing in vain. In one sense this is true, because the whole of nature is conducted by the continual providence of the Being who created the whole. In what are called the operations of nature, God is the first and sovereign agent. The maxim, therefore, that nature never acts in vain, is true; but the truth of it rests upon the wisdom and power of God, who made and governs nature. And it is improperly alleged as itself being a first principle of science, of original and intrinsic evidence, since it is only a consequence of another principle, that God never acts in vain."*

Among those false principles which have prevailed to a great extent, and exerted a very baneful influence, is that which alleges that because goodness and mercy are essential perfections of the divine Being, whose name is love, therefore he will never punish a weak, erring, and mutable creature with everlasting misery for such errors as his very nature throws him into. I have no doubt but that hundreds of thousands take shelter under this specious principle, though it is one which subverts the divine authority, contradicts the testimony which declares that he will judge every man "according to his works," and takes away moral responsibility: it supposes man to be merely passive in committing evil, whereas he is an active offender against his fellow-creature, an active sinner against his Maker and against the dictates of his own conscience. In neglecting all means for his moral improvement,—in despising or rejecting the method that Infinite Wisdom has provided for his recovery, pardon, and sanctification,—in persisting in a course of opposition to God's declared will, nay, disputing its very authority,—he is not merely unfortunate, but guilty. Therefore his taking shelter

* Horsley, vol. iii., p. 332, 333.

under God's goodness and mercy, and urging these against his holiness and justice, is futile and vain; for the justice of God forms as properly a principle of judgment as those attributes selected for convenience and excuse. It may be also observed that just original principles never clash one against another, but harmonize and give strength and confirmation to the humble enquirer after truth.

The study of principles is unquestionably of high importance to the Christian minister. The time necessary for acquiring proficiency in it may be unwillingly given up; but experience will prove that instead of time lost it is time gained; for, the more accurately we ascertain the principle of a text or subject, the more certainly we avoid subsequent darkness and embarrassment; for here we have the mirror of a subject, and that which gives elements and argument. The judicious application of our Topic to the elucidation of truth forms a broader distinction among preachers than learning and science ever can do. By the successful study of principles a preacher will therefore more surely grow in the estimation of his people, at least of all judicious persons, than by all his attainments in classical learning. By running back to causes (which is one of the explanatory and synonymous terms of principles) our greatest divines have acquired an imperishable name, by proving most clearly the infinite and eternal being of Jehovah independent of authority or written testimony. It is by the examination of principles that Locke, Beattie, Watts, S. Clarke, Berkeley, Butler, Abernethy, Horsley, and many others, have acquired their just fame, while those who cannot or will not think must make to themselves a name of meaner materials, which will soon perish and be forgotten.

I am fully aware that the humble though diligent student is commonly the most fearful: the very mention of such great names may be discouraging. Allow me to say that in this excellence there are many degrees; we may say, in this case, as has been excellently said in another, that "here a lamb may wade, an elephant may swim." The lowest degree is honourable, and not of difficult acquirement, but some degree is absolutely indispensable. It is somewhat like our common reason; it is of all growths, but is everywhere the chief honour of human kind.*

The practical application of our Topic will, I have no doubt, be found in what the puritan authors termed "*previous considerations*;" see p. 49. They did not adopt the term principle, but they attended to the thing itself.† Their manner appears to us to have been exceedingly prolix and tiresome: the principle on which they acted was, that it is better to say too much than too little. Some of our modern preachers, however, think otherwise. Men are ever prone to extremes; but the wise will take a middle course. In general, when the principle is once made sufficiently plain, it is perhaps dangerous to proceed. The following is an example of previous considerations, from Howe on Heb. x. 36: "For you have need of patience," &c. To illustrate the force of this expression, he proposes several previous considerations, which in fact include the principles on which the text turns. These are,

* Upon the subject of this Lecture, read attentively the former parts of Dr. Burder's Mental Discipline, a work of very great value, though in small compass.

† It would of course be improper for us to be always using the term; but we as well as they can attend to the thing itself by other forms of expression.

I. That the natural constitution of the human soul disposes it equally to covet and pursue a desirable good and to shun a hurtful evil.

II. That the want of such a desirable good is as afflictive and grievous as the pressure of a present evil.

III. That an ability to bear that want is as real and needful an endowment as the fortitude by which we endure a painful evil.

IV. That, therefore, it equally belongs to patience to be exercised in the one case as in the other; and, the general nature being found in each, the name (patience) is with equal fitness common to both.

The primary application of this Topic, as a Topic of occasional observation, is sufficiently illustrated by Claude in his first example, on John v. 14; but it is proper to observe that sometimes a more important service may be assigned to it, as furnishing one or more subdivisions, or one general head, or even a whole discourse.

Let us take an example from Mr. Howe, on Isa. lxiii. 10: "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Consider,

I. The evil done, in its nature and in its cause or principle.

1. In its nature. The Spirit of God was vexed.

1.) It is implied that something was done against his will; his will was really crossed.

2.) It is implied that he does apprehend and resent such an offence (Ps xciv. 7; Deut. xxxii. 34), though not with such perturbations as men feel.

2. Enquire concerning the cause or principle of this vexation. This we shall discover in the titles and attributes of this Spirit, by which we shall see what must necessarily vex him. See Eph. iv. 30.

1.) The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of truth (John xiv. 17), and he must be offended when his truth is lightly esteemed and loosely adhered to.

2.) He is called the Spirit of grace (Heb. x. 29.) It must be offensive when the very grace of which he is the author, which he applies or reveals, is rejected by so many.

3.) He is called the Spirit of faith (2 Cor. iv. 13); therefore infidelity must be obnoxious, and when persons continue long under the gospel in obstinate unbelief, &c.

4.) He is called the Spirit of love, which is the great principle that disposes and inclines the soul towards God. He has given us the Spirit of love, 2 Tim. i. 7. That principle which influences and is the life and soul of all the communications between the blessed God and believers, which itself therefore is called the communion of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Surely, then, love despised is a very heinous offence.

5.) He is called the Spirit of power and life (John vi. 63; 2 Tim. i. 7); therefore all deadness in divine things (Rev. iii. 14—17) must be loathsome to him.

6.) He is called the Spirit of holiness (Rom. i. 4, and in the text, "his Holy Spirit.") How then can he dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, who walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit?

7.) He is the earnest of the blessed inheritance (compare 2 Cor. v. 5, with 1 Cor. ii. 9—12); therefore when all the tendencies of professors are earthly, here is a perfect opposition.

8.) He is a Spirit of prayer (Zech. xii. 10); but when there is no yielding to its influence, when that reproof is just, "Thou hast not called," &c. (Isa. xliii. 22), or when prayer is heartless, cold and dead, formal and irregular, it is loathed of the Spirit.

9.) He is the Spirit of union (Ezek. xi. 19); but where there is no union, no Christian love, the Spirit will depart. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Now this view of the cause or principle upon which the vexation of the Holy Spirit proceeds is very definite and plain, and prepares the way for the second part of the subject, which is "The evil suffered—God turning against them." Nothing is more needful than a due examination of our conduct in regard to the Spirit. A dreadful catalogue of evils may fall upon

us if we grieve this Spirit, and that scripture be fulfilled in us, Hos. ix. 12.

Mr. Walker, vol. iii., on James iv. 13—15, in the first part of his discourse, exposes the false principle involved in the language which the apostle condemns. He says,

In general, we may observe, this language relates altogether to a worldly project. The principle object is *gain*, not the "true riches," or that "good part" which shall never be taken from those who choose it, but the gain of this world. They said nothing of the measure of gain that would satisfy them, and nothing of the use to which they meant to apply their wealth. For anything that these expressions imply, their desires might be without bounds, and their sole aim might be "to heap up silver as the dust," &c., to "join house to house," &c.

If this remark be just, we have already discovered one capital error in the language of these men. To seek gain by honest industry for necessary supplies, is not only lawful but honourable; but to seek it for its own sake, merely for the sordid pleasure of possessing it, betrays a mean and selfish spirit, unworthy of a man, and much more of a Christian man.

Further: The great Lord of all has no part in this scheme. These little, arrogant words, "we will," thrust out God at once, and occupy his place. The persons here described appear to ensure their lives against sickness and casualty; they think all will go well even for a year—a full year! No allowance is made for change of climate or fatigue, for robbery, or fraud, or fluctuations in the price of their goods: but they will get large profits, &c.: whereas, when truth is allowed to speak, she says, "You know not what shall be on the morrow." "This night your souls may be required;" for "what is your life? it is even a vapour." This plain proposition, "your life is a vapour," undermines the scheme at once, and overwhelms the proud builders with shame.

This is an exposure of a false principle of action, and the folly described is not of rare occurrence. How strikingly is it exhibited by our Lord in the parable of him whom, in derision, we call "the fool in the gospel!" I beg leave also to remark, on this quotation from Walker, that it is a fine example of comment—a comment on the principle itself, which will always serve you a good turn either *pro* or *con*. Lawyers and senators are very partial to this kind of comment, and frequently employ it with great effect. It is here that they apply the lash of irony and sarcasm, by which they cut through the very sinews of false principles, and expose sophistries or errors.

As it will often be needful to examine and refute false principles, I offer no apology for quoting the following instance of exposure by Howe, which refers to a still more lamentable evil, alas! too common in our age. The text is, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity," 1 Cor. xiii. 6. It is supposed that those professing Christians who do not rejoice in the iniquity of any of their own party, or sect, may yet feel a secret satisfaction at the slips and falls of a party that is more particularly opposed to them: in this they think there is no sin. This is the false principle reprehended.

You have (says our author) much reason to the contrary, (viz. of rejoicing in sin) both upon the common account and your own.

1. Upon the common account. That the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious Christians, be so fertile and productive of such monsters, made up of the sacred Christian profession conjoined with pagan lives! and the more of sanctity any pretend to the more deplorable is the case when the wickedness breaks forth that was concealed before under the vizard of that pretence. Is this no matter of lamentation to you? or will you here again say your unrelatdness to their party makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will surely (you think) excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed? Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a Christian? Are you not a Protestant? and what do you account that but reformed primitive Christianity? and so the more it is reformed the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it in your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian re-

ligion by which to sever yourselves from the body of other Christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member say, "I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not the Christian name that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of those that bear that name? Whose laws are those that are broken, the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say you are unrelated to them too? or have you no concern with them? Can any party be united within itself by such sacred ties as those by which all Christians are united with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases as the matter of your humiliation (when they occur within your notice) but by renouncing Christianity. Nor indeed would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a Christian? and even that, methinks, should oblige us to bewail the depravedness and dishonour of the nature and order of human beings, that those who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting and wallowing in worse impurities than those of the dog or the swine. The more strictness in morals they have pretended to the greater is your obligation to lament their violations of those sacred rules (which you also profess to be subject to), and not the less. Do I need to tell you that even among pagans, where profession of greater strictness had been once entered into, an apostacy to gross immoralities has been the subject of solemn lamentation, as in the school (or church, should I call it?) of Pythagoras, where, when anyone who had obliged themselves to the observance of his virtuous precepts did afterwards lapse into a vicious course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them as if they had been dead.

2. On your own account; for when our Saviour says, "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," does he not also say, "Woe to the world because of offences?" and who would not fear and lament his share in that woe? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin? What if it encourage you to sin too? What if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sins dispose to atheism, and to think there is nothing in religion? And if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, that itself argues that the infection has caught upon you, seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals; so that you have cause to lament your ever having rejoiced, to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, &c., James iv. 9. One would think those indeed but half men, and scarcely any Christians, that can allow themselves in so inhuman and unhallowed a pleasure as rejoicing in another's sin. It is very unworthy in man to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuousness that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others—much less of the prudence, to make sport of common mischief; and would a Christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause, and in the dishonour and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?

Here also we have the reprehension of a false principle in the manner of comment, severe, yet just. It is however necessary to remark that some principles may be doubtful, or at least opinions founded on them may be so: true Christians may upon many points differ; and in such cases we are not to comment upon the sentiments of each other with severity, but to confine ourselves to fair and temperate argument. No passion should here be suffered to rise; for, when once it is excited, in all probability it will not subside before much mischief is done.

For an extensive and masterly exposure of the false principles commonly advanced or acted upon by the nominal professors of Christianity, I must refer the student to Mr. Wilberforce's *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians*, a work of unspeakable value, the whole of which deserves to be read with close attention; but I cannot prevail upon myself to quit this part of my subject without giving you a brief extract, in which the fallacy of two of the most specious and destructive principles is very forcibly exhibited. The one is, that "it signifies little what a man believes, if his practice be upright," &c. The advocates of this sentiment often quote with exultation the well-known lines of Pope:

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight ;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

The other is that "whatever a man's opinion and conduct may be, provided he be sincerely convinced they are right, he cannot be criminal in the sight of God," or, in other words, that "sincerity is all in all." Our author observes :—

It would detain us too long fully to set forth the various evils inherent in these favourite positions, of which it is surely not the least that they are of unbounded application, comprehending within their capacious limits most of the errors which have been received, and many of the most desperate crimes which have been perpetrated, among men. The former of these maxims proceeds on the monstrous supposition that, although accountable creatures, we shall not be called to account for the exercise of our intellectual and mental powers. Moreover, it is founded on that grossly fallacious assumption, that a man's opinions will not influence his practice. The advocates of this fashionable principle require to be reminded that the judgment often receives a corrupt bias from the heart and the affections ; that vice is the fruitful mother of prejudice and error. Forgetful of these acknowledged truths, and confounding the most important moral distinctions, they place on the same level those who occupy themselves in a sincere and warm pursuit of truth and those who yield themselves implicitly to the opinions which early prepossession may have infused, or which passion or interest, or even acquiescing indolence, may have imposed upon their minds.

The latter of the foregoing maxims, that sincerity is all in all, proceeds on this groundless supposition, that the Supreme Being has not afforded us sufficient means of discriminating truth from falsehood—right from wrong ; and it implies that, be a man's opinions or conduct ever so wild or extravagant, we are to presume that they are as much the result of impartial enquiry and honest conviction as if his sentiments and actions had been strictly conformable to the rules of reason and sobriety. Never indeed was there a principle more general in its use, more sovereign in its potency.

How does its beautiful simplicity and compendious brevity give it rank before the laborious subtleties of Bellarmin ! Clement and Ravallac, and other worthies of a similar stamp, from whose purity of intention the world has hitherto withheld its due tribute of applause, would have here found a ready plea ; and their injured innocence should now at length receive its full, though tardy, vindication. "These, however," it may be replied, "are excepted cases." Certainly they are cases of which anyone who maintains the opinion in question would be glad to disencumber himself, because they clearly expose the unsoundness of his principle. But it will be incumbent on such a one first to explain with precision why they are to be exempted from its operation, and this he will find an impossible task ; for sincerity, in its popular sense, cannot be made the criterion of guilt and innocence on any ground which will not equally serve to justify the assassins who have been instanced. The conclusion cannot be eluded : no man was ever more fully persuaded of the innocence of any action than those men were convinced that the horrid deed they were about to perpetrate was not merely lawful, but highly meritorious. Thus Clement and Ravallac, being unquestionably sincere, were therefore indubitably innocent. Nay, the absurd and pernicious tendency of this principle might be shown to be even greater than what has yet been stated. It would scarcely be going too far to assert that, whilst it scorns the defence of petty villains, who still retain the sense of good and evil, it holds forth, like some well-frequented sanctuary, a secure asylum to more finished criminals, who, from long habits of wickedness, are lost to the perception no less than to the practice of virtue, and that it selects a seared conscience, and a callous heart, and a mind insensible to all moral distinctions, as the special objects of its vindication. Nor is it only in profane history that instances are to be found, like those which we have mentioned, of persons committing the greatest crimes with a sincere conviction of the rectitude of their conduct. Scripture will afford us parallels ; and it was surely to guard us against the very error which we are now exposing that our blessed Saviour forewarned his disciples : "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."*

In the following example, from South, our Topic occupies a prominent place. Isa. v. 4 : "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ?"

The words are Jehovah's vehement complaint against the Jewish church and nation, his peculiar and most endeared people; and I shall consider the principles upon which the complaint turns as to the form of expression the text offers, and the matter contained in it. Consider,

I. The form of expression. The words run in a pathetic interrogatory exclamation, importing surprise and a kind of confusion in the thoughts of him who utters them. Here we have the *assignable cause* (the principle of the words.)

1. Here is something strange (if anything can be strange in such a world as this.) Whatever falls out either above or beside the common track of human observation, and so puts the reason upon new methods of discourse, we are accustomed to call strange and such as causes surprise, which is nothing else but a disturbance of the mind upon its inability to give a present account of the reason of what we see, whence also it is that, as we still know more, the strangeness of things grows less, and consequently nothing can be strange to him to whom everything is known. But how then come we here to find God himself under a surprise, and Omniscience as it were put to a *nonplus*? Surely it could be no ordinary thing that should thus put Infinite Wisdom upon making enquiries; nor indeed was it; for could anything be imagined more monstrous, and by all rational principles unresolvable, than upon a most rich and fertile soil, fenced and enclosed against all injuries from abroad, dressed and manured by the finger of God himself, and watered with all the influences of a propitious heaven—I say, could anything be more prodigious than, in such a place, to see a fig-tree bear a thistle, or the fruit of the bramble load the branches of the vine? This is a thing directly against all the principles of mere nature, though not encouraged by the assistance of art; and therefore even the God of nature seems to stand amazed at the unnatural irregularity of such a monstrous event.

2. The other reason of such an interrogatory exclamation is the unusual indignity of the thing, this being as great an anomaly in the morality of actions as the former was in the nature of things; and therefore, as that passion of the mind which is raised by the strangeness of a thing is properly called wonder, so that which commences upon this is properly called indignation, it being a great trespass upon decency and ingenuousness, and all those rules that ought to govern the intercourse of rational beings, which are all crossed and even dissolved by that one grand, fundamental destroyer of society, *ingratitude*. For society subsists by the mutual interchange of good offices, by which the wants and concerns of men are mutually supplied and served, that being the only thing that unites and keeps men together in civilized societies, who would otherwise range and raven like bears and wolves, and never but to seize a greater prey.

Now we find that ingratitude is the thing here exclaimed against with so much vehement *abhorrence*, a passion that has all in it that wonder has, with the addition of something more. Wonder rests merely in the speculation of things; abhorrence proceeds to a practical aversion and flight from them. But since a sinner is no strange sight, nor can it pass for a wonder to see men wicked, what cannot be found in the bare nature of things must be sought for in their degree, and therefore it must needs be some superlative height of wickedness which drew from God this loud exclamation; what that is will appear in the prosecution of the subject. We have,

II. The complaint itself, as a further development of the principle upon which it proceeds. Consider then,

1. The party complaining, which is God himself. It must be confessed that, according to the strict nature of things, as he who knows all things cannot wonder, so neither can he who can do all things properly *complain*, wickedness being the cause of complaining, as ignorance is of wonder; yet God is here pleased to assume the posture of both. But, however possible it may be for Infinite Power to complain, it is certainly impossible for Infinite Goodness to complain *without a cause*; so that we read the indubitable justness of the complaint in the condition of him who makes it—a being transcendently wise, just, and merciful, who cannot be deceived in the measures he takes of things and persons, nor prevaricate with those measures, by speaking beside the proportion of what he judges. And, after all, he it is that complains who has power enough to render all complaint needless, who has an omnipotence to repair to, and an outstretched arm to plead his cause in a higher dialect than that of words and fair expostulations. We see therefore the person here complaining, even the great and omnipotent God; and, we may be sure, where God is the plaintiff no creature can with either sense or safety be defendant.

2. The persons here complained of: they were the Jews, the peculiar and select people of God, a people that had no cause to complain. From the beginning of God's

taking them under his care they were fed at the immediate cost of heaven ; they were dieted with miracles, with new inventions and acts of providence, the course of nature itself ministering to their necessities, the heavens, the sea, and all things dispensing with the standing laws of their creation to do them service, in order to their serving God. But it seems it was easier to fetch honey out of the bowels of the earth, to broach the rock, or draw rivers from a flint, than to draw obedience from them. They were persons who wore all the marks of the peculiar incommunicable kindnesses of heaven, Ps. cxlvii. 20. They seemed an exception from (or rather above) the common rule of providence—a people whom God courted, espoused, and married, and yet, by a still greater wonder, continued to court them after marriage. God thought nothing too good for them to enjoy, nor thought they any thing too bad for themselves to commit. They were a people culled and chosen out of the rest of the world ; in short, they were in some sense a gathered congregation, of whom God thus sadly complains.

3. The next thing to be considered is the reason or cause of this complaint raised against them, which was their unworthy, unsuitable returns made to the dealings of God with them ; which will appear, first, by considering God's dealings with them ; and, secondly, their dealings with God ; and so, by confronting them both together, we shall give them all the advantage of contraries set off by nearness and comparison.

1.) The dealings of God with them may be included under three heads :—(1.) Instruction. They had the sure word of prophecy, which was able to make them wise unto salvation. (2.) Mercies. The showers of his choicest blessings descended to refresh the vineyard of God. (3.) Judgments. The pruning-knife of judgments is added to the more gentle manurings of mercy ; and, when watering will not do, divine forbearance still digs about them before he executes the sentence of extirpation. Well therefore might Jehovah say to his people, “What could have been done more to my vineyard?”

2.) Let us now look at their unsuitable returns. The context declares that the vineyard brought forth wild grapes, and specifies particularly, (1.) Their injustice and oppression, ver. 7. (2.) Their rapacity and covetousness, ver. 8. (3.) Their luxury and sensuality, ver. 11, 12.*

Now I presume it will be apparent that the doctrine of principles, and their due and vigorous investigation, are here realized, mixed with much severe comment and critical acumen ; yet it must be allowed that the style and argument are rather too profound for a common audience. I may add that, while the doctor has certainly shown that the Jewish “vine” did bring forth “wild grapes,” he is not to be commended for insinuating that the Puritans in like manner brought forth a bastard Christianity instead of the true ! The complaint brought against the Jews will apply to every apostate church upon earth ; the elements of things are in all cases alike : it is human nature to abuse God's mercies. Here we see the infinite blessedness of being “kept by the power of God through faith to salvation.”

A whole discourse might be formed upon Heb. iv. 11, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest,” by considering what are the principles of the apostle's reasoning in the text. These are,

I. That without labouring we can never enter into this heavenly rest, because the end and the means can never be separated.

II. That this rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for our labour.†

The principles developed in the conduct of scripture characters form a branch of study which will abundantly reward the student's attention. Many of the sublime *doctrines* of the New Testament cannot be traced to principles, because they are matters of pure revelation ; here we have nothing to do but to receive them with the docility of children, and be thankful for

* See South, vol. v., p. 357.

† E. Cooper, vol. ii., p. 397.

the divine condescension that brought such sublime truths to our knowledge, truths which the "angels desire to look into." Never let us attempt to "be wise above what is written," or to bring down the sublime truths of revelation to the standard of human ratiocination, which I think to be not only a very high offence, but the sure path to error and confusion. Generally, however, no difficulty will be found in tracing *actions* to their principle, while this will always furnish scope for much profitable remark. Let the student endeavour to attain a comprehensive acquaintance with these principles of action, beginning this study with the easiest things, the easiest parts of scripture; and what part can I recommend so properly as the actions of our blessed Saviour as narrated in the Gospels? That which rendered the Saviour's teaching and doing so infinitely transcendent above all others will be found in the principles to which they may be traced: these were so uniform and correct as to draw forth the admiration, if not the approbation, of all men, even of enemies. It is true these principles were impugned by his enemies (Matt. xii. 24), but, whatever they might say, they knew better; they had a consciousness that the principles upon which our Lord spoke and acted could not be contravened. Nicodemus's acknowledgment, and the well-known testimony of Josephus to Christ's character, are decisive of the point. Many of our modern infidels have made similar acknowledgments, and have but too justly exposed the iniquity of nominal Christians by reference to the Redeemer himself. These principles were the fair transcript of the Saviour's divine and mediatorial character. Jesus would as soon cease to be as not to act upon them; they gave determination to every act, ruled all thought and expression, and were an essential part of him who was "the light" and "the truth," by which he became the restorer of all things. They were generally the very opposite of such as were popular, though this reflects no great credit on popular opinion; yet, when examination and reflection followed, the one appeared to be right and the other wrong.

Hence I think the principles of our Lord cannot be placed in a better light than by contrasting them with the prevailing principles of the Jews, as discovered in the three years of our Lord's ministry on earth. I might also observe that the disciples of our Lord themselves partook in some measure of the popular errors of the day; and I fear that the disciples of our Lord in the present age, with all the superior advantages derived from the New Testament are not without the tincture of false principles. It may therefore be useful to suggest a few of those points of contrast which will often come before you in discoursing on the works and words of Christ.

I. It will be observed that the dominant principles of the Jews were *selfishness* and *jealousy*. They conceived that the divine favour did and ought to rest on themselves. Happy would it have been for us if their principles had died with them. The Pharisee gathered around him all his national prejudices and vain conceits, and scorned all the rest of mankind, whom he compared to dogs and swine. However offensive these principles were to our Lord, yet he never treated the Jews with severity on this account, because there was something in the institution of the Jewish economy which might, if separated from the prophecies that related to the calling of the Gentiles, give some ground for this national prejudice. Our Lord therefore adopted the mildest course in the discovery of his own principles upon this head. Hence he exhibits the excellence of the divine procedure in the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, that of the Good Samaritan, and particularly that of the Prodigal Son, or, as it might perhaps more correctly be denominated, the parable of the Forgiving Father, which were well adapted to place in an odious light the unbecoming feelings which the Pharisees che-

rished towards such characters as the publican and the prodigal, as well as towards those who had compassion on them. Our Lord discovered in his own conduct the principles of love and compassion to the lost and the miserable. He says, he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Benevolence, mingled with compassion, was the leading principle of our Redeemer's life; and here we see what principles we ought to cherish, as preachers of the gospel, towards poor sinners. If Christianity consists in any one specific quality, it is in this, and it becomes a rule of judgment in determining both our own conduct and that of others. A man is a Christian as far as he drinks into this spirit and no further. A man may be a virtuous man without it, but cannot be a Christian—an imitator of Christ. The mind that was in Christ is not in that man who has not, in some degree, cherished the principle and cultivated the habit of beneficence, who is destitute of the generosity, philanthropy, and commiseration which he manifested. Benevolence towards the outcasts of mankind is a fountain of grace that feeds and supplies every service. It never exhausts or yields reluctantly, but flows in copiousness and blessedness; the whole world is a pitiful price for such a character. He lives, but not to himself; labours but for the good of others; seeks not his own things, but the things of others.

II. Our Lord says, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up," Matt. xv. 13. He found his vineyard overrun with thorns, Luke xiii. 4., and xiii. 11. To such a degree had *hypocrisy* spread that it was the wonder of the age that a man of sincerity was found: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" John i. 49. This principle is so evidently vicious and hateful that no man will own its existence in himself. The selfish principle was treated with some degree of lenity, but hypocrisy drew forth the severest expressions that ever escaped the Saviour's lips. We may guard against a thief, but we cannot always be aware of the hypocrite. Now the principles of Jesus were the very reverse of this, for he spoke frankly and openly to the world. He was in this respect "the truth;" the law of truth was upon his lips. Sincerity and uprightness were principles of his conduct, and hence he justly becomes a pattern of imitation.

III. The corrupt principle of *pride* entwined itself around the Pharisee. This our Lord exposed in a severe lesson (Luke xiv. 7—10), which seems to be taken from Proverbs xxv. 5—7. Jesus lays to their charge that they loved to walk in long garments, and to be greeted in the market, and to be called Rabbi. On the contrary, Christ exemplified humility and meekness, Matt. xi. 29. He was humble and meek under all indignities. He took upon him the form of a servant. He was among his disciples "as one that served." Now this principle flowed into his life, and there was no office too mean for him; he took a towel and girded himself, and actually washed the feet of his disciples. Humility, however passive, or however mean it may appear, is in reality a noble and important principle of action, a principle essential to active Christianity. Pride will choose its work, but humility stoops to the meanest service that Christ requires. Thus Christ did not glorify himself, but him that sent him. His life was a life of wonders, yet his acts flowed not from a principle of ostentation; and, whatever acts are discovered among men to spring from pride, they are vicious in the very source of them. Christ's principles were free from this abominable taint.

IV. The Jews cherished *revenge*, and all the black passions that associate with it, Matt. v. 38, 43. But the principles of Jesus were forbearance and meekness under injuries and provocation. Hence he says, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." The principles of Jesus on this head are as clear as the sun; and hence he said on the cross, in respect to his bitterest enemies, at whose wicked instigation he suffered, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Must we not say shame upon the Christian world, so little to be moved by these principles? Most just it is that those who are actuated by opposite principles should suffer all the effects that follow so closely upon their heels. It may be said that this principle of the blessed Jesus is merely a passive quality. I deny that it is merely passive; for whatever quenches the violence of fire, or abates the burning fever, must be active. Bad men kindle fires, and good men put them out. Most certainly the people called Quakers are, in this respect, as a body, the truest copy of our Lord's example, and most moved by his principles; but all such persons, of whatever name, as are like them, shall share the commendation of him who has said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

I find I shall hazard all patience if I attempt to follow up the contrast, and therefore I shall only add here,

V. The wickedness of the Jews generally, which ended in the death of Christ and the

overthrow of their nation, and which led to such a state of things that Josephus says, "Such was the wickedness of the people that, if Titus Vespasian had not besieged them, some vengeance from heaven, some earthquake, some fire from heaven, kindred fire to that of Sodom, must have exterminated that people." Now the principles developed in the actions of the blessed Jesus were all resolvable into *goodness*: "a good tree brings forth good fruit." Always, everywhere, in every page, in every word, in every act, we see this principle of goodness; "he went about doing good," Acts x. 38. This goodness dictated all his miracles; they were all manifestations not merely of divine power, but of pure goodness. It required but little solicitation to excite this goodness; it was enough that misery or distress was seen or heard of, and the benefit was conferred. It was goodness without partiality (James iii. 17) to nation or sect, to state or fortune. "The blessing of those that were ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

You will, I doubt not, perceive that in discoursing upon the various miracles of Christ, as well as upon his whole conduct, a recurrence to these principles of action will often furnish very suitable materials for comment and illustration, and the same may be said in relation to the writings of apostles and prophets, whose characters and principles appear more or less in connexion with the things they were inspired to write. In them indeed infirmities are discoverable; but even these will not invalidate the great and noble principles by which they were actuated. It will not be difficult to trace back the actions of the apostles to principles derived from Christ. Let the whole life of the apostle Paul, in particular, be subjected to the most severe scrutiny. We shall see nothing but this—"the love of Christ constrained him."

The student will also observe that all the counteracting influences that opposed the career of the gospel originated in the principles of hell and the prince of darkness, as we see by Paul's declaration, Eph. vi. 12.

In bringing this Lecture to a conclusion I must beg leave to offer a few remarks as to *principles of interpretation*,* particularly in relation to the figurative language of the New Testament (which will also apply to that of the Old). Mr. Robinson says, "The doctrine of principles is extremely important to a Christian minister, and particularly in studying, first, the *sense* of scripture as laying a foundation for doctrines; and, secondly, in studying the *letter* of scripture, that is, the nature and principles of construing or expounding divine truth." But such principles of interpretation as our great biblical doctors recommend to students I shall not in this place copy, imitate, or recommend, whatever I may do under any other Topic. I am however desirous of "leading you in a safe way wherein you will not stumble," and in an easy way also.

In figurative language our Lord was particularly copious. Such language nature loves. However, it was not to indulge us that our Lord employed it, but because there was a necessity for it as an inlet to such ideas as could not be received so well in any other way. On this point I shall quote a passage from Dr. John Clarke in Boyle's Lectures.

The principles of all religion and goodness being laid in the mind and heart, the secret dispositions and genuine acts of which are invisible, and known only to a man's self (1 Cor. ii. 11); therefore the powers and operations of the mind can be expressed only in figurative terms and by external symbols; the motives or principles and in-

* See R. Watson's Theological Institutes, vol. i. part i. chap. 11, very excellent; and Owen on Heb. v. 4, p. 333, 334, &c. [On the general subject, the student should master Dr. Davidson's Sacred Hermeneutics; and on the New Testament, Fairbairn's Hermeneutical Manual, and Dr. Ellicott's Essay on Interpretation in Aids to Faith. J. J. Conybeare's Bampton Lecture for 1824 refers to most of the earlier works.]

ducements to the practice of which being spiritual—such as affect men in a way of moral influence, and not of natural efficiency, the principal parts of which are drawn from a consideration of a future state, consequently these likewise must be represented by allegories and similitudes taken from things most known and familiar here below. And thus we find in scripture the state of religion illustrated by all the most beautiful images we can conceive, in which natural unity, order, and harmony consist, as regulated by the strictest and most exact rules of discipline, taken from those observed in the best ordered temporal governments. Now, in the interpretation of places in which any of these images are contained, the principal regard is to be had to the figurative or spiritual, and not the literal, sense of the words; from not attending to which have arisen absurd doctrines and inferences, which weak men have endeavoured to establish as scripture truths; whereas, in the other method of explication, the things are plain and easy to every one's capacity, make the deepest and most lasting impression upon their minds, and have the greatest influence upon their practice. Of this nature are all the rites and ceremonies prescribed to the Jews with relation to the external forms of religious worship, every one of which was intended to show the obligation or recommend the practice of some moral duty [he should have added, or to teach some important gospel doctrine], and was esteemed of no further use than as it produced that effect, Isa. i. 1, &c. And the same rule may be applied to the rewards and punishments peculiar to the Christian dispensation, which regard a future state. The rewards are set forth by those things in which the generality of men take their greatest delight and place their highest satisfaction in this life; and the punishments are such as are inflicted by human laws upon the worst of malefactors; but they can neither of them be understood in the *strictly literal sense*, but only by way of analogy, as corresponding in the general nature of the thing, though very different in kind.

Independent of the able argument *à priori* here cited in favour of the mediate, mystical, or spiritual interpretation of the scriptures, unless such interpretation be admitted, we cannot avoid one of two great difficulties: either we must assert that the multitude of applications made by Christ and his apostles are fanciful and unauthorized, and wholly inadequate to prove the points for which they are quoted; or, on the other hand, we must believe that the obvious and natural sense of such passages was never intended, and that it was a mere delusion. The Christian will not assent to the former of these positions; the philosopher and the critic will not readily assent to the latter.*

While man is in the body, as a great Hebraist observes, he must receive his instructions through the bodily senses. He cannot of himself form an idea of any thing spiritual, but as it is compared to, and illustrated by, some material object. And this method of instruction God has followed in the scriptures, both in the language and in the composition. The language is entirely suited to man in his present state, every Hebrew word signifying, first, some material object, and thereby conveying the idea of some corresponding spiritual object. And the scripture composition abounds with images and illustrations of divine things taken from nature. The evangelical prophet, Isaiah, is a remarkable instance of this kind of writing. He represents the various parts of the kingdom of grace under their expressive and familiar pictures in nature. He sets spiritual things as it were before our eyes under the images which God has established in his created works, in order to bring them down to our understanding. And every illustration of this kind, being God's own application of things natural, must be considered as infallible truth. The spiritual application is as certain as the outward fact from which it is taken. God would not use the book of nature to illustrate the book of grace unless the illustration were

* The subject of figurative language will be resumed in future Lectures; it is introduced into this Lecture chiefly to show the principle of its just interpretation.

just and instructive ; for it is not consistent with his perfections to propose to his creatures what would deceive, or to reveal what would not tend to edify them.

Those scriptures to which a spiritual meaning is to be attached, according to the idea alluded to, are very numerous. They are found in allegories, prophecies, ceremonies, institutions, tropes, idioms, figures of speech, resemblances, parables, allusions to secular affairs ; and these spread themselves all over scripture : when therefore the preacher has to treat of these, he must do it with a careful hand ; and indeed he has great need of divine teaching, as noticed in regard to making observations. Here a wise discretion is to be exercised ; it requires a truly spiritual and evangelical mind, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Perhaps it may not be improper to observe, in this place, that there are three kinds of writing in sacred scripture—

1. Such as may be understood in the plain literal sense, and must not be diverted from it, as the account of the creation,* plain history, plain commands and interdictions, and indeed every thing that relates to such facts and circumstances as the human mind, independent of supernatural aid, is capable of comprehending. Here there is no occasion for unusual language, and none such is used. Now and then a figurative form of expression is employed, as in the sixth chapter of Genesis, "All flesh had corrupted its way ;" still this is uncommon : it is rare, and breaks not the general rule. In general cases, as to this class of scripture, the plain sense is to be regarded as the true meaning ; and we must always remember that we are to take a sense *from* scripture, and not bring a sense *to* it ; and to this true sense we ought strictly to confine ourselves both in dividing upon the passage and in quoting it by way of proof or illustration.

2. There are a great number of passages that seem not to terminate in the occasion and in the persons to whom they relate, but which have a double sense, as the births of Ishmael and Isaac, Gal. iv. and 1 Cor. x. Almost every thing that related to Israel in Egypt, as well as their sojourn in the wilderness and their settlement in Canaan, is of this sort.

There is, perhaps, no book of the Old Testament more admired than the book of Psalms, and no book is perverted more from its original principles. Instead of being applied to Jesus Christ, as it generally is in the New Testament, it is considered as relating only the experience of David, and is quoted principally to illustrate the joys and sorrows under the present dispensation. It is very frequently accommodated to justify the mere reveries

* "Some have dreamt of I know not what figures and allegories in that part of the Mosaic history which describes the creation, as that, though *days* are mentioned, yet it is a figure to denote an indefinite period, as the time mentioned was too short for physical causes to operate to their ends, and therefore a day must mean a term of undefined duration. But in what manner the creation was conducted is a question about a fact, and like all questions about facts must be determined not by theory but by testimony, and, if no testimony were extant, the fact must remain uncertain. But the testimony of the sacred historian is peremptory and explicit. No expressions could be found in any language to describe a gradual progress of the work for six successive days, and the completion on the sixth, in the literal and common sense of the word "day," more definitely or more unequivocally than those employed by Moses : and those who seek or admit figurative expositions of such expressions as these seem not to be sufficiently aware that it is one thing to write history and quite another to compose riddles," &c.—*Bishop Horsley*, vol ii. p. 225, &c.

of enthusiasts. A great part indeed records joys and sorrows, thanksgivings and complaints; but a greater than David, or any mere man, is most frequently intended.*

I may also add that a very great number of the prophecies which plainly point to Christ referred, in their first application, to eminent persons of the Jewish nation.

3. There are also numerous other passages the evident intention of which leads us from a literal to a spiritual sense. Things relating to our immortal spirits, their operations and change of state, are couched under expressions that belong to our bodies and our natural faculties. Our awful state by nature is represented by the leprosy (Isa. i.), our renewal in conversion by a new heart (Ezek. xxxvi.), the operations of the Spirit to this end by water that cleanses.

Where a word has several significations in common use, the meaning which should be given to it in interpreting scripture can be ascertained only by a careful examination of the passage of scripture under consideration, in connexion with its context, and with parallel passages, in which the phraseology may be more definite. These parallels are of vast importance where the word or phrase under consideration is at all doubtful. For instance, the word *blood* may be adduced as an illustration of this remark. The great importance of this term, and its frequent use in the Jewish law, suggest a careful enquiry about it. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood." "And without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The reason of consecrating the blood to God rather than any part of the victim is mentioned Lev. xvii. 11: "For the life of the flesh is in the *blood*, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Such is the harmony of the Old and the New Testaments upon this subject that no difficulty occurs in our studies. But still the word has many significations in scripture. Sometimes it signifies the natural descent from one common ancestor, as Acts xvii. 26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. Sometimes it is used figuratively for death: to "resist unto blood" is to resist unto death, Heb. xii. 4. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." Hence the term blood is frequently used in reference to the death of Christ considered as an atonement for sinners; as, "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9. These expressions in the New Testament are an allusion to the typical blood under the Old; and we are taught to reason thus: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 13, 14. Again, "God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation, that we may have faith in his blood;" that is, that we may believe in the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, Rom. iii. 25; Eph. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The blood of Christ is also represented as the procuring cause of justification: "Being justified by his blood" (Rom. v. 9), that is, through the merits of his atonement. In other passages sanctification is imputed to the blood of Christ: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. vii. 14.

* Balfour.

The term used in this sense signifies the *consequent* blessings of the cross meritoriously obtained thereby.

We see, at every step we take, the great importance of a correct judgment in fixing upon the true principles of interpretation, by which alone we can "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." A very learned papist says (though falsely) that such is the uncertainty and ambiguity of words and phrases in the original scriptures that it is impossible for any man to understand them, and that in this dilemma the only course that could be taken was to refer to the church. It is true there are difficulties; yet these may be surmounted by the means which God has put into our hands. We shall not therefore go to Rome to enquire what is the sense of the church upon scripture; for, though the pope and his council assume the expounding office, yet it is abundantly evident that Luther saw far more clearly than the pope into the true meaning of scripture. I have the same hope of you all. "I thank thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, that, though these things be hidden from the wise and the prudent, thou hast revealed them to babes."

However, we must take care to be consistent, and, in fixing upon a principle of interpretation, we must not make scripture contradict itself, which we should do, in some cases, if we followed the strictly literal sense. If we were so to fix the principle of interpretation, we should abuse the passage, Matt. xviii. 8, 9; for it is contrary to Exod. xx. 13. Nothing must be done to hazard our lives unnecessarily. Again: the sentence, "My Father is greater than I," must not be understood as contradicting another declaration, such as "I and my Father are one." The context and the nature of the discourse from which both expressions are taken (two main things always to be attended to) render it evident how they ought to be understood, namely, that the first was indicative of himself as man, the second of his proper divinity. Again: in John xiv. 24, Christ tells his disciples that "his Father had sent him;" that is, in his quality of Messiah he was sent. Now, as the sender is greater than he that is sent, so in this sense the Father is greater than the Son; but it certainly requires very little argument, and no sophistry, to reconcile this saying with the most orthodox notion of the deity of Christ, and to show that there is nothing in this and similar passages which may not be understood without opposing the declared intention of Jehovah, as it is expressed by Christ himself, "That all men should honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father." It must be obvious to every unprejudiced reader of the New Testament that the passages which speak of the person of Christ may be ranged into two classes, which can admit of no consistent interpretation, but as they are considered as exhibiting the Saviour under the two very different aspects just named—the one class being applicable only to his manhood, and the other class, comprising a great many passages, representing him in his true and proper divinity. These statements bring forward the great dispute between us and the Socinians, or, as they choose to be called, Unitarians; and every preacher ought to know the strength of his arguments against those who deny the divinity of Christ. Their ordinary mode of argument on this subject consists in taking up some passage which speaks of Christ in his human nature, and, having proved that he was truly man (which of course it is not difficult to do), they very modestly jump to the conclusion that he is man only, thus contenting themselves with begging the question at issue. I have always thought it a forcible argument

in our favour that, by the preaching of our doctrines, God blesses the word and converts souls; but by our adversaries' doctrine no conversions from profligacy or ungodliness are realized; they merely catch some of our apostates or backsliders, and call them converts, as having adopted their opinions, but without pretending that any salutary change has taken place in their character.* However, we know that many of these are recovered, and become more firm than before; an instance we have in the Rev. Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford.

When it is considered how many general truths, important doctrines, and solemn exhortations, are to be pressed upon your people, it must be obvious that a just interpretation of those passages of scripture on which they are to be founded is a matter of the highest importance. Is it not certain that for want of such just interpretation many errors creep into the church, which endanger men in their course heavenwards, or at least tend to produce much unsettledness of mind, much doubt and perplexity? What misery is thus entailed on man! This applied to any individual is bad enough; but how much greater the mischief when a teacher of divine things neither knows "what he speaks nor whereof he affirms," when he rashly presumes upon the meaning of scripture, and utters that for the mind of the Spirit of God which arises only from the fumes of his own presumptuous spirit! But the meek, the humble enquirer, God will guide in judgment, and teach him his way; he shall not materially err, though he may not be what is termed learned. A long course of experience and observation has confirmed me in these conclusions, and I conceive myself justified in the preceding remarks on these principles of interpretation by the practice of the first preachers of whom we have any knowledge, I mean Ezra and his companions. "They read in the book of the Law of God *distinctly*, and gave the *sense*, and caused the people to understand the reading," Neh. viii. 8. I may also add a sense of correctness is the true foundation of holy boldness in the pulpit: I do not mean a pert or dogmatical, but a holy boldness, arising from a consciousness of truth and zeal to diffuse it, and producing perfect freedom from "the fear of man that bringeth a snare."

Besides the spiritual sense of scripture, to which I have referred, there are the parabolic, the allegorical, and the typical senses, which are commonly treated of in critical works; but I would not carry away the mind of the student too much from plainer matters. I would particularly recommend the young preacher never to recur in public to a doubtful sense of scripture, but to let the difficulty lie on hand awhile. There is an amplitude of plain and edifying matters upon which to speak for a little time, and until satisfactory solutions can be obtained of what at present may appear to be of a doubtful character.

A judicious commentary will be found of great value, not to supersede the necessity of your own careful study, but to suggest such hints as may put you in the right track and thereby save much valuable time. The most useful work of this kind for a preacher, and indeed for the private Christian who desires to enter into the fulness and the spirit of scripture truth, is that of Matthew Henry, from which several quotations are made in these lectures. The best edition of this valuable work is that recently published by [Nisbet & Co., in nine vols. 8vo for £2 5s.] Those whose resources will

* This argument is exhibited by the late Mr. Fuller in an admirable manner, in his Socinian and Calvinistic Systems Compared. See his works, vol. i.

allow will also derive great advantage from Scott, and Dr. Adam Clarke. There are also two other works of this kind, which may be obtained at a moderate price: the one is the Dutch Annotations in an English dress, and the other "Annotations upon the Old and New Testament, by the joint labours of several divines, by authority, 1645," which is very sound in doctrine. I may add, as superseding other *critical* works, the Condensed Commentary, by Ingram Cobbin, which may be had for 35s.*

I am not without my fears that too close an attention to *critical* works has its evils as well as its benefits, by leading the student into a kind of labyrinth of criticisms and injunctions, or a circle of rules from which we hardly know how to break out. It is true a great mind can contemplate and profit by a number of particulars of these kinds; but very many teachers of Christianity cannot be called great, and, if they were, the rules given would scarcely be necessary at all. Some persons, it is to be feared, contract such a fondness for these nice points that the plainer things of the gospel do not retain that place in the study which the interests of their illiterate and less refined hearers require; hence perhaps the few hints here thrown out may be more conducive to general good than an elaborate and critical exhibition of all the rules and canons laid down for interpreting scripture.

There is still one caution which cannot be too strongly urged upon the student's attention, and that is, that, whatever other principles of interpretation he may adopt, he must beware of neglecting that of *common sense*, which is by no means an uncommon thing even among learned men. There are many high compliments paid to common sense, and every one lays some claim to it; and it certainly will go far towards a right understanding of the scriptures.† Mons. Claude says, "Consult good sense," upon which Mr. Robinson gives two anecdotes out of his inexhaustible store. The one cites the case of a gentleman who was disgusted with the common representations or meanings given by some expositors on a certain part of our Lord's temptation. He set a sensible little boy to read the fourth chapter of Matthew; and after he had read the fifth verse—"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple," he asked the little boy, How do you think the devil took Jesus and set him on a pinnacle of the temple? Why, sir, replied the little expositor, I suppose as you would take me up to the top of St. Paul's. He further says, "I know a minister who has a high opinion of a little common sense, and who frequently employed a poor illiterate old man to read the scriptures to him, merely for the sake of finding what an ordinary understanding could make of scripture. Read to me, John, said my friend, the fourth chapter of the Acts: he began to read and expound also—'*And as they spoke unto the people*'—Who spoke to the people? Oh, I see, Peter and John: the blessed apostles were not willing to eat their morsel alone; their Master had said, '*Freely you have received, freely give*'—'*The priests, and the captain of the temple, and Sadducees came upon them*'—Wicked priests always keep bad company; soldiers and unbelievers do keep them in countenance!

* [The best work of this kind is the *Critici Sacri*, of which the best edition was published at Amsterdam in 1698 in 13 vols. folio. For other commentaries, see Introductory Essay.]

† Bishop Horsley says that any common mechanic of good sense may by comparing scripture arrive at a clear view of scripture truth.

What has the captain to do with conscience?—*‘Being grieved that they taught the people’* to turn them from their iniquities—Why! would they not make better servants and better subjects?—*‘And preached through Jesus the the resurrection from the dead.’*—The apostles had too much love for the poor to puzzle them with words and disputes. They told the poor that they were to rise from the dead, and to be judged for the deeds done in the body, that not a proud priest, nor a blustering captain, but a compassionate Jesus was to be their Judge, and that all this was proved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself from the dead, &c. From this poor man, though illiterate, the minister declared that he had often derived considerable light into the meaning of scripture.”—*Robinson’s Claude*, vol. i., p. 39, 40.

Such must ever be the dictates of good sense; but I confess I am not a little suspicious of a forgery. How comes this plain old man to have such covert spite against the priests?

Having recited these very common interpretations, it is only right that I should give place to an author of a more learned character, to show that we have no prejudice against learned men, and to prove that some learned men employ common sense in exposition, as well as the characters just now introduced.

The quotation is from Bishop Horsley’s exposition of Luke iv. 18, 19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” &c.

“This day,” said our Lord, “is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” The phrase “this day” is not I think to be understood of that particular Sabbath day upon which he undertook to expound this prophetic text to the men of Nazareth, nor “your ears” of the ears of the individual congregation assembled at the time within the walls of that particular synagogue. The expressions are to be taken according to the usual latitude of common speech—“this day” for the whole time of our Lord’s appearance in the flesh, or at least for the whole season of his public ministry, and “your ears” for the ears of you, inhabitants of Judea and Galilee, who now hear my doctrines and see my miracles. Our Lord affirms that in his works, and in his daily preaching, his countrymen might discern the full completion of this prophetic text, inasmuch as he was the person upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah was, whom Jehovah had anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, &c. Again, none but an inattentive reader of the Bible can suppose that these words were spoken of the prophet Isaiah himself. Isaiah had a portion without doubt, but a portion only, of the divine Spirit. In any sense in which the Spirit of Jehovah was upon the prophet, it was more eminently upon him who received it not by measure. The prophet Isaiah restored not, that we know of, any blind man to his sight, he delivered no captive from his chains. He predicted indeed the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, their final restoration from their present dispersion, and the restoration of man from the worse captivity of sin: but he never took upon him to proclaim the actual commencement of the season of liberation, which is the thing properly implied in the phrase of “preaching deliverance to the captives.” To the broken-hearted he administered no other balm than the distant hope of one who in future times should bear their sorrows; nor were the poor in his own time particularly interested in his preaching. The characters therefore which the speaker seems to assume in this prophetic text are of two kinds—such as are in no sense answered by any known circumstance in the life and character of Isaiah or of any other personage of the ancient Jewish history; but in every sense, literal and figurative, of which the terms are capable, apply to Christ—and such as might in some degree be answered in the prophet’s character, but not otherwise than as his office bore a subordinate relation to Christ’s office and his predictions to Christ’s preaching. It is a thing well known to all who have been conversant in Isaiah’s writings that many of his prophecies are conceived in the form of dramatic dialogues, in which the usual persons of the sacred piece are God the Father, the Messiah, the prophet himself, and a chorus of the faithful; but it is left to the reader to discover, by the matter spoken, how many of these speakers are introduced, and to which speaker each part of the discourse belongs. It would therefore have been reasonable to suppose that this, like many other passages, is delivered in the person of the Mes-

siah, had our Lord's authority been wanting for the application of the prophecy to himself.

Following the express authority of our Lord, in the application of this prophecy, we might have spared the use of any other argument, were it not that a new form of infidelity has of late reared its hideous head, which, carrying on an impious opposition to the genuine faith, under the pretence of reformation, in its affected zeal to purge the Christian doctrines of I know not what corruptions, and to restore our creed to what it holds forth as the primitive standard—under that infatuation which by the just judgments of God ever clings to self-sufficiency and folly—pretends to have discovered inaccuracies in *our Lord's own* doctrines, and scruples not to pronounce him not merely a man, but a man peccable and fallible in such a degree as to have misquoted and misapplied the prophecies of the Old Testament. In this instance our great Lord and Master defies the profane censures of the doctors of that impious school. The text, referred to its original place in Isaiah, is evidently the opening of a prophetic dialogue: and, in the particulars of the character described in it, it carries its own internal evidence of its necessary reference to our Lord, and justifies his application of it to himself."

Now, though this quotation cannot conceal the bishop's learning, yet it is so simple and familiar as to appeal to the plain principles of common sense. The following is an example of common sense triumphant over the opinion of many very learned men in the reign of Elizabeth, which has been received and defended for three hundred years, viz., that the forty-fifth Psalm celebrates the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter.

Read the forty-fifth Psalm with care, and tell me if you can any where find king Solomon? We find, indeed, passages which may be applicable to Solomon; but not more applicable to him than to many other earthly kings, such as comeliness of person and urbanity of manners, as ver. 2. These might be qualities, for any thing we know to the contrary, belonging to Solomon; I say for any thing we know to the contrary, for in these particulars sacred history gives us no information. We read of Solomon's learning, and of his wisdom, and of the admirable sagacity and integrity of his judicial decisions; but we read not at all, as far as I can recollect, of the extraordinary comeliness of his person, or the affability of his speech; and, if he possessed these qualities, they are no more than other monarchs have possessed in a degree not to be surpassed by Solomon. Splendour and stateliness of dress, twice mentioned in this Psalm, were not peculiar to Solomon, but belonged to every great and opulent monarch. Other circumstances might be mentioned, applicable indeed to Solomon, but no otherwise than as generally applicable to every king. But the circumstances which are characteristic of the king who is the hero of this poem are every one of them utterly inapplicable to Solomon, inasmuch as not one of them can be ascribed to him without contradicting the history of his reign. The hero of this poem is a warrior, who girds his sword upon his thigh, rides in pursuit of flying foes, makes havoc among them with his sharp arrows, and reigns at last by conquest over his vanquished enemies. Now Solomon was no warrior; he enjoyed a long reign of forty years of uninterrupted peace. He retained indeed the sovereignty of the countries which his father had conquered, but he made no new conquest of his own. "He had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates, over all the kings on this side of the river (they were his vassals); and had peace on all sides round about him." "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon." If Solomon ever girded his sword upon his thigh, it must have been merely for state; if he had a quiver of sharp arrows he could have no use for them but in hunting. We read, indeed, that Jehovah, offended at the idolatries of Solomon in his old age, stirred up an adversary unto Solomon in Hadad the Edomite, and another in Rezin the Syrian, and a third in Jeroboam the son of Nebat. But, though Hadad and Rezin bore Solomon a grudge, there is no reason to suppose that the enmity of either broke out into open hostility during Solomon's life at least, certainly into none of such importance as to engage the old monarch in a war with either. The contrary is evident from two circumstances: the first is that the return of Hadad into his country from Egypt was early in the reign of Solomon, for he returned as soon as he heard that David and Joab were both dead; and if this Edomite had provoked a war in so early a part of Solomon's reign the sacred history would not have spoken in the terms in which it speaks of the uninterrupted peace which Israel

enjoyed all the days of Solomon. The second circumstance is this : in that portion of the history which mentions these adversaries it is said of the third adversary, Jeroboam, that "he lifted up his hand against the king," and yet it is certain that Jeroboam never lifted up his hand till Solomon himself was in his grave. Solomon was jealous of Jeroboam as the person marked out by the prophet Ahijah as the future king of one branch of the divided kingdom, "and sought to kill him." Jeroboam thereupon fled into Egypt, and remained there till the death of Solomon; and this makes it probable, of the two foreign adversaries, that whatever hatred might be rankling in their hearts they waited for Solomon's death before they proceeded to open hostilities. But, however that might be, it is most certain that the character of a warrior and a conqueror never less belonged to any monarch than to Solomon.

Another circumstance wholly inapplicable to Solomon is the numerous progeny of sons, the issue of this marriage, all of whom were to be made princes over all the earth. Solomon had but one son that we read of that ever came to be a king, his son and successor Rehoboam; and so far was he from being a prince over all the earth that he was no sooner seated on the throne than he lost the greater part of his father's kingdom.

Upon the whole, therefore, it appears that in the character which the Psalmist draws of the king whose marriage is the occasion and the subject of this song some things are so general as in a certain sense to be applicable to any great king, of fable or of history, of ancient or of modern times; and these things are applicable to Solomon because he was a great king, but for no other reason : they are no otherwise applicable to him than to king Priam or Agamemnon, to king Tarquin or king Herod, to a king of Persia or a king of Egypt, a king of Jewry or a king of England. But those circumstances of the description which are properly characteristic are evidently appropriate to some particular king, not common to any and to all. Every one of these circumstances, in the Psalmist's description of his king, positively excludes king Solomon, being manifestly contradictory to the history of his reign, inconsistent with the tenour of his private life, and not verified in the fortunes of his family. There are, again, other circumstances which clearly exclude every earthly king, such as the salutation of the king by the title of God, in a manner in which that title is never applied to any created being, and the promise of the endless perpetuity of his kingdom. At the same time every particular of the description, interpreted according to the usual and established significance of the figurative language of prophecy, is applicable to and expressive of some circumstance in the mystical union between Christ and his church. A greater therefore than Solomon is here; and the corrected Bibles give us the title of the Psalm, "The majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom,"* &c.

I have reserved for the last a most important principle of interpretation, and that is, that *scripture is the best interpreter of scripture*. This is now very generally admitted, but its application requires much industry and discrimination. Among the methods in which it may be applied one of the most important is that of comparing the language of a text with other passages in which the same terms or some synonymous expressions are used. But for further remarks on this subject I must refer you to a future Lecture, on the Sixteenth Topic. To young preachers, especially to those who in consequence of a defective education, and the want of suitable books, may meet with difficulties which they are unable readily to surmount, I would strongly recommend, in the first place, a most careful perusal of the scriptures, *with these difficulties in view*, to see whether many hard passages, may not be thus understood, and especially doing this with serious prayer for Divine teaching : this is in the power of all students. There are I hope but few who do not possess Cruden's Concordance. Here very valuable articles are given at the head of many important words : these heading pieces are collected by Cruden, with very great care and judgment, from the lists that follow (being made after the collections were formed); and by careful observation he investigated in how many different senses any particular

* Horsley, vol, i, p. 82.

word was used so as to agree with contexts, and the evident intention or scope of such passages, so that the true key of his headings is hereby obtained: refer for instance to the words *flesh* and *spirit*, and it will appear what a vast number of distinct uses are made of these words, every one of which is taken out of the list, to our very great edification. The student might also try his own skill on some words to which no such headings appear, and thus with no other book a great many difficulties might be surmounted, as to the meaning of single words. I have compared Cruden's definitions of the word *flesh* with those of the learned Campbell in his Dissertations, and find that Cruden is by far the more copious of the two.

On taking a retrospect of the whole matter introduced under this Twelfth Topic, the student will, I doubt not, be fully convinced of the importance of studying principles, in order that he may be able to apply them with propriety and advantage in the elucidation of truth, and will be prepared to devote no small portion of time and attention to this object. We have seen that the Topic is well adapted to occasional remarks by way of exposition or comment; and, from the examples which have been quoted, you can be at no loss in applying the Topic to the more extended service of supplying one division or even the *material* of a whole discourse. What has been said as to the principles of interpretation may indeed be considered as a somewhat oblique use of the Topic. Similar liberties I have before taken, and I feel myself justified in so doing, so far as it may tend to your improvement.

LECTURE XVIII.

TOPIC XIII.

CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES.

THIS is the converse of the preceding Topic. In tracing the "principles" of a word or action we consider it as arising from something else, and our reflections are directed backward to the cause in which it originated. "Consequences" lead the view forward: if our text records the conduct of any who have gone before us, either as an example for our imitation, or the contrary, we may point out the effects, or the good or evil consequences, which actually followed such conduct, as far as they can be traced in the records of scripture: if it contain a precept, an exhortation, a caution, &c., our topic leads us to show the natural tendency or the divinely appointed issue of the practices to which it refers.

Suppose, for example, that you are discoursing on the character of Abraham, and particularly on his prompt obedience to the divine commands, you may remark the consequences of his obedience, and show that the declaration of the Psalmist, "in keeping his commandments there is great reward," is frequently verified in an eminent degree, not only in the peace and satisfaction which results from a consciousness of having acted under the direction of an infallible counsellor and an unchanging friend, but even in the consequences immediately resulting from such a course of action. When Abraham was about seventy-five years of age God commanded him to leave his Father's house. "He went out," leaving his country and his connexions, "not knowing whither he went," and became a sojourner in a

strange land. But it is quite manifest from the brief sketches of scripture that he lost nothing by forsaking all : the hand of the Lord was with him ; he was rendered prosperous in his circumstances ; he enjoyed a large portion of domestic happiness ; all the land in which he sojourned was granted by divine promise to his posterity ; above all, he was favoured with communications from God which assured him that he was an object of regard to him whose favour is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life itself. The most remarkable instance of his obedience was the offering up of his son—at least in intention—as a burnt sacrifice. Though Isaac was the son of his old age, the only son of his beloved Sarah, the son of promise, and the fountain of many blessings, yet he hesitated not at the divine command to give him up ; and, in consequence of this evidence that he feared God, the divine promise and covenant engagements were renewed afresh, and ratified by oath ; “ By myself have I sworn that *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from me, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thine seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, *because* thou hast obeyed my voice.” Gen. xxii. 1—19. If, on the other hand, you were pointing out the sinfulness of parental indulgence, or of neglecting to employ parental authority, from the character of Eli, you would remark that even the piety of Eli did not prevent the evil consequences of his conduct in this respect, &c.

The consideration of consequences is certainly one which has great power over the mind of man ; and even the most abandoned and reckless of the species are not altogether proof against the arguments which may be founded on this Topic. Most men are willing to forego the enjoyment of a present good or to submit to a present evil, if by so doing they may avoid future evils or secure future benefits of greater magnitude. Hence it is that the man of business rises early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, that he may escape future privation and embarrassment, or secure future ease and independence. It is true indeed—lamentably true—that multitudes who are very careful in weighing consequences as they may affect their worldly interest are as regardless of the more solemn and momentous consequences which affect the interests of the soul ! they are concerned to act wisely in relation to time, but in relation to eternity their conduct is characterized by the most consummate folly ! This however by no means proves that the Topic is less adapted to affect the mind, and influence the conduct, when extended to spiritual and eternal things ; but it does prove the deep depravity of the human heart, since it arises from a secret disbelief of the plainest statements of God's word. Men flatter themselves that such tremendous consequences as the Bible declares will not follow their disobedience and impiety. Their language is (at least the language of their heart, as expressed by their actions) “ we shall have peace though we walk in the imagination of our hearts,” notwithstanding God has declared that “ there is no peace to the wicked.” They hope in some way or other to escape the doom of the wicked, without giving up the indulgence of their own hearts' lusts, though Christ has said “ except you repent you shall all likewise perish.” They are unwilling to reflect on a subject so gloomy, or to have their present pleasures interrupted by the apprehension of misery to follow, and therefore put the subject far from their thoughts, as if they imagined that God would not regard his own threatenings.

Now, if this be the case, how important is it that the ministers of Christ should be skilful in the employment of our present Topic! If arguments drawn from the consideration of consequences should fail, by what avenue can we hope to reach the heart? How are the great purposes of our ministry to be answered? How can we commend ourselves to the consciences of men as in the sight of God? Our sermons may be heard with pleasure, but, as the effect of our ministry, we shall never be gladdened by the eager inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" Men may derive an intellectual gratification from a well-arranged discourse; the elegance of its diction, the harmony of its periods, the beauty of its imagery, may fascinate their minds and procure their plaudits; but, unless this Topic is brought home with power to their hearts, no spiritual benefit will be realized.

I am not to be told that, however faithfully and skilfully the subject may be pressed on the attention of our hearers, we must not expect that our representations will ever persuade them to "flee from the wrath to come," and to "lay hold on eternal life," since it requires a divine power to turn sinners from darkness to light. It is true of all the means which we employ, in order to win souls to Christ, even though divinely appointed, that of themselves they are *inadequate*; but is it therefore of little consequence whether or not they be *adapted*? Is there nothing in the suitability of the means by which the Spirit of God is pleased to work? Does not the Spirit operate by softening the heart and inclining the mind to attend to those things which his servants declare? How was it that Lydia was brought to the knowledge of God? Let the evangelist instruct us: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." But if the things which Paul declared had not been adapted to impress upon her the importance and necessity of looking to Christ for salvation, though her heart was opened to attend, yet she would have heard that sermon in vain. We need only refer to the parable of the Prodigal Son in order to see what considerations those are which the Spirit of God presses home to the heart of the sinner, and by which he is led to return unto God with weeping and supplication. How did the Prodigal reason? "When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger: I will arise and go to my father." Why arise and go to his father? What could have induced the resolution but an expectation, founded on the well-known kindness and compassion of his parent's heart, that he would be received into the peaceful family, and enjoy the blessings of his father's house? There is a somewhat similar passage in Hosea ii. 7: "I will go and return to my first husband: *for then was it better with me than now.*" No man ever truly begins to repent of sin till he is convinced that it is not only evil in itself but bitter in its consequences. Ps. cxix. 59.

If then this view of the subject be correct, the Topic is not one to which it may be proper merely to refer occasionally, which is the case with some others, but it should have a place in some form or other in almost every discourse: in uniform application, particularly, it occupies a principal place. It may also be remarked that this Topic does not require that close reflection or patient research which appears necessary to the judicious application of the former Topic. Here a heart truly alive to the glory of God and the value of immortal souls, and a familiar acquaintance with scripture, are the chief requisites. The scriptures abound with appeals to consequences in a

great variety of forms, which not only set before you the most perfect examples, but likewise furnish both matter and language ; such passages, for instance, as Prov. vi. 29, 28 ; Eccl. xi 9 ; Prov. i. 24—31, will sufficiently exemplify this remark.

I shall now proceed to lay before you an example, not of division, but of close reasoning upon the Topic, premising, however, that some few of the thoughts introduced are arranged in a different order from that in which they are placed by the author, and that some trifling verbal alterations are also made. Dr. S. Clarke on Gal. vi. 7 : “Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

The arguments proper to persuade men to the practice of virtue, drawn from the abstract consideration of the nature and reason of things,—from the intrinsic beauty and excellency of virtue and the deformity of vice,—from the usefulness and proper tendency of virtue to promote the general welfare of men even in this present state, and the mischievous consequences of wickedness and debauchery to the world—arguments, I say, of this kind, in their proper place and season, to generous and considerate minds, and in suitable circumstances of things, have in them a real weight of truth, and carry along with them, when impartially attended to, an undeniable force of rational conviction. But in a corrupt and confused world, where the wickedness of some hinders the virtue of others from producing its just and natural effects, where the understandings of many are perplexed and puzzled, where the best are frequently hated and persecuted even for the sake of their very virtue itself, and where the wills of men are strongly biassed to evil—in such a confused state the most universally proper and only effectual arguments are those which are drawn from the final consequences attendant upon their conduct. Some persons, indeed, there are, who will pretend that, since virtue ought to be chosen for its own sake, when it is practised through hope of reward or fear of punishment it ceases to have the nature of virtue. But in this they greatly err. For though virtue is indeed very excellent and amiable in itself, and what a reasonable agent cannot but always acknowledge it to be his duty to choose ; yet, if God had not annexed to it any sufficient encouragement to support men effectually in that choice, it would follow that the nature of things, and the final dispositions of Providence, were inconsistent, it being indeed neither possible nor truly reasonable that men by adhering to virtue should at any time lose their lives, if thereby they were to deprive themselves eternally of all possibility of receiving any benefit from that adherence. Hence we find that the ancient worthies in scripture are never blamed, but commended, for seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly ; and even Moses had “respect unto the recompense of reward ;” nay, and our Lord himself, “for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hence also the apostle employs the language of the text as an argument to persuade men. Let us therefore proceed to consider,

I. The fundamental doctrine here stated—that every man shall finally receive of God according to what he has done : “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” This maxim is the reason and end of all laws, the maintenance and support of all government, the foundation and ground work of all religion. In matters of less importance, and in opinions of particular and more minute consideration, which depend on the truth of many collateral notions, there will always be room for difference of apprehensions, and many errors may possibly be of small consequence. But this doctrine of rewards and punishments finally proportionable to men’s behaviour is a truth of the same certainty and of the same importance with the acknowledgment of the very being of God and of the natural and essential difference between good and evil, for which reason the apostle in the text, by a very lively and expressive figure, represents it under the similitude of things which have in nature the most immediate and necessary connexion : “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” And what our Saviour alleged upon another occasion, to express the reasonableness of judging concerning men’s hearts from their actions, may no less properly be applied here, as a rule for every man to judge from his present actions concerning his own future state : “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.” As the fruit is always of the same kind with the stock that bears it, and the grain reaped is necessarily of the same sort with the seed that was sown, so men’s final state of happiness or misery shall be the proper and correspondent effect of their present actions : “He that soweth

to the flesh," as the apostle expresses it in the words following my text, "shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." In the present time we frequently see this in some degree verified, in what we usually call the natural course and consequences of things; for in this present life, besides the benefits of virtue to mankind in general and the destructive consequences of vice to the world, the happiness of every particular man's own mind has necessarily a very great dependence upon that consciousness of good and evil which unavoidably attends his actions.

The apostle's similitude therefore, in the text, not only in general is a certain and infallible truth, but is also a truth which has in itself a more immediate and necessary connexion than men are usually sensible of. It is not only true that God has actually set before men such and such promises and threatenings; but it will, no doubt, be found true also, at the final issue and event of things, that he has appointed, by as close and regular a connexion in morals as in naturals, that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

In the natural and material world the more observations men make, and the greater accuracy they arrive at, and the longer periods of time they are able to take in, the more clearly and distinctly do they discern that, in that innumerable variety of the works of God, all things conspire uniformly, with the most exquisite exactness, to produce (and that sometimes out of the greatest seeming confusions) the properest and most regular effects. The moral world is of infinitely greater importance; it is that for the sake of which the material world was created and without which this beautiful and stupendous fabric of the inanimate universe is nothing. It cannot be doubted then, by any reasonable person, that the same wisdom which, in the unintelligent works of nature, has shown forth itself in the contrivance of such inexpressible aptnesses and proportions of things, will much more in the government of rational beings (which are in a far nobler and more proper sense the subjects of God's power and kingdom) show forth itself finally in making every event, through a wonderful variety of different dispensations, terminate at length in most evident and illustrious manifestations of perfect justice, goodness, and truth.

However therefore melancholy pious persons may be sometimes tempted almost to despond, when they observe how Providence in the present time suffers all things seemingly to come alike to all, yet in reality their reward is laid up for them with God much more certainly than grain, which in the winter seems to lie dead in the earth wherein it was sown, may be depended upon to bring forth fruit in its season. The psalmist expresses this very emphatically, Ps. xxvi. 6: "Those that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." The figure is the same with that in the text, and the literal meaning of it is well expressed by the author of the Book of Wisdom, ch. iii. 4, and v. 15: "Though they [the righteous] be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality; for their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High." And by the apostle himself, Rom. ii. 7: "To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality," God will give "eternal life." And therefore he exhorts (Heb. x. 35), "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise; for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And St. James in like manner, ch. v. 7: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

On the contrary, however presumptuous and careless persons may deceive themselves with numberless vain imaginations, expecting to "reap where they have not sown, and to gather where they have not strewed," yet, as certainly as the nature of things is unvaried and the perfections of God are unchangeable, the final issue of things in the future state will be universally what Job observed it to be sometimes even in the present state: "I have seen that those who plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same: by the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed," Job iv. 8.

This therefore is the first particular observable in the text. The apostle here lays it down, as the general and fundamental doctrine of true religion, that every man shall finally receive of God according to what he has done: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

II. The fact here intimated—viz. that every opinion or practice that subverts this great and fundamental doctrine is in reality a mocking of God. It is so,

1. Because it is confounding the necessary reasons, proportions, and consequences of things. Indeed, what is it else but men's taking upon themselves to be wiser than God, and presuming that the consequences of things ought not to be what they are or what he has declared they shall be?

2. Because it is entertaining very dishonourable and very injurious apprehensions of the perfections and attributes of God himself.

3. Because it is perverting the whole revelation of Christ, and attempting to overthrow the whole design of his religion. See Matt. xvi. 27; Rev. xxii. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10.

Whoever attempts to elude these plain declarations, by imagining any other rule whereby men shall be judged, does in reality make a mockery of religion, or, as the apostle expresses it in the text, he mocks God and deceives himself.

III. The caution here given: "Be not deceived." There are many deceitful considerations which (without due care) will be apt to draw men into the destruction which the apostle here admonishes us to avoid.

1. Some deceive themselves by a general carelessness and inattention. They pursue the ends of ambition and covetousness; they labour continually to gratify their passions and appetites, and consider not at all that "for all these things God will bring them to judgment."

2. Some content themselves with a loose and general expectation that they shall fare as well as others, disregarding the voice which declares "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

3. Some trust to the correctness of their opinions, and are wise in their own eyes, though not washed from their filthiness; but the language of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, shows that such persons deceive their own souls.

Several other considerations are mentioned, under the influence of which men put away the fear of future consequences and mock the threatenings of God; but enough has been quoted for our present purpose. I have only to add, in this place, that in lecturing to your people you may employ this Topic in various ways with effect. Every thing that is reprehensible may be shown to be attended with evil consequences: every thing that is good may also be referred to consequences; for "godliness is profitable for all things." The consequences of yielding to temptation, and of relaxing in the ways of God, it will often be necessary to point out, as well as those that will certainly follow upon a patient continuance in well doing. Hos. vi. 3; Rom. ii. 7—11. You may remind them of the fact that God's ancient people, the Jews, evidently fell or rose, enjoyed prosperity or suffered adversity, as consequences of their respective conduct, and that the primitive churches fared well while they preserved the simplicity of the faith, but fell into utter ruin upon their declension. You may appeal to their own experience: what good consequences always followed their conduct when regulated by the revealed will of God, and how easily most of the evils of which they complain may be traced to some causes in a part of their history which cannot be forgotten, because it lives in the sorrows which it occasioned. You may also remind them of the divine goodness in averting many deserved evils, and of divine faithfulness in fulfilling the word of grace upon which he first caused them to hope. Joshua took up this topic with great effect in his dying exhortation to all Israel, Josh. xxiii., xxiv.

Besides the broad and general view of our Topic which has been considered in the foregoing pages, there is also another mode in which it will demand your attention, viz., as it includes the inferences derived from any truth, or the considerations which by natural consequence follow from any doctrine,* &c.; and it is certainly of great importance in subjects of con-

* See Lecture VIII. on Propositional Discourses.

troversy, and such as are more particularly liable to abuse. You must so speak and write as to leave no just ground for the objections of your adversaries ; and, if they charge your opinions with bad consequences, you must not only refute such charges, but also set in array the good consequences that must follow upon the reception of them. You may also point out the evil consequences which the notions of your opponents seem to involve ; but this must be done with fairness and candour, otherwise you will probably establish what you intended to refute, or at least subject yourselves to the charge of substituting railing accusations for temperate and scriptural reasoning.*

The illustrations given of this Topic by Mons. Claude will sufficiently point out its use as a topic of observation. He observes that "when we explain the doctrine of God's mercy, it is expedient (at least sometimes) to remark the *good* and lawful uses which we ought to make of it. These uses are, to renounce ourselves, to be sensible of our infinite obligations to God, who pardons so many sins with so much bounty, to consecrate ourselves entirely to his service, as persons over whom he has acquired a new right, and to labour incessantly for his glory, in gratitude for what he has done for our salvation.

"We may also observe the false and *pernicious* consequences which ungrateful and wicked men, who sin that grace may abound, pretend to derive from this doctrine. They say, We are no longer to consider justice now we are under grace—The more we sin the more God will be glorified in pardoning us—This mercy will endure all the time of our lives, and therefore it will be enough to apply to it at the hour of death, with many more such false consequences, which must be both clearly stated and fully refuted.

"It is much the same with the doctrine of the efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost in our conversion ; for the just and lawful consequences which are drawn from it are, 1. That such is the greatness of our depravity that it can be rectified only by Almighty aid. 2. That we should be humble, because there is nothing good in us. 3. That we should ascribe all the glory of our salvation to God, who is the only author of it. 4. That we must adore the depths of the great mercy of our God, who freely gave his Holy Spirit to convert us.

"We must remark at the same time the abuses and false consequences which insidious sophisters draw from this doctrine, as that, since the conversion of men is by the almighty power of God, it is needless to preach his word and to address to them, on God's part, exhortations, promises, and threatenings,—that it is in vain to tell a sinner it is his duty to turn to God, as without efficacious grace (which does not depend upon the sinner) he cannot do it,—that it has a tendency to make men negligent about their salvation to tell them it does not depend on their power. These, and such like abuses, must be proposed and solidly refuted.

"Moreover, this method must be taken when you have occasion to treat of the doctrines of election and reprobation—the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood—and, in general, almost all religious subjects require it ; for there is not one of them all which is not subject to use and abuse. Take care, however, when you propose these good and bad consequences, that you

* See Lecture XXV.

do it properly, and when an occasion naturally presents itself; for, if they are introduced with any kind of affectation and force, it must be disagreeable.

"In general, then, this way of good and bad consequences ought to be used when there is reason to fear some may infer bad consequences, and when they seem to flow from the text itself; for in this case they ought to be prevented and refuted, and contrary consequences opposed against them."

Instead of pursuing the Topic further, in its original character, I shall now turn aside to establish some counsels upon it, which I hope will not be without their use even as exemplifications of the Topic; and if, in the prosecution of your future labours, the following remarks should be the means of guarding you against failure by a timely consideration of consequences, my end will be obtained, and you will escape many a rock on which others have fallen, some of whom have sunk to rise no more.

There are two things in particular to which I entreat your attention: in the first place, remember that an attention to the consequences which your conduct involves should regulate you in all your engagements and pursuits; and, secondly, never suffer the consideration of *present* consequences to deter you in the faithful discharge of known duty, or induce you in any degree to compromise your principles.

First, an attention to consequences is necessary in all your engagements and pursuits. This consideration of consequences is termed wisdom, prudence, foresight. Hence Solomon says "the prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." If you wish for a more full definition, read the book of Proverbs throughout; for here, as Dr. Watts has observed, you will find maxims of prudence more in number and greater in value than in all the sages of antiquity put together.

Permit me here to remind you that the whole of human life is but one concatenation of causes and effects. Every action and every imagination of man has its consequences, many of which extend to eternity. These necessarily follow the acts to which they respectively belong; nothing need awaken surprise; nothing here occurs too early or too late; nothing comes without being sent for, or brings a wrong tale when it comes. This is true as to the natural course of things; but still reservation is to be made for the controlling acts of a superintending Providence. God often mercifully averts evil, or turns thoughts and actions from their direct ends, and makes them bend to his own purposes: this is so manifest from scripture, and from common observation, that we may leave the thought to its own protection. But I say, generally, every act and every thought has its natural and direct consequence in evil or in good. And is not this the hinge upon which free-agency and moral accountability turn? Have we not here an avenue to honour or infamy? Hence it was said, as early as the first age, "if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and, if thou doest ill, sin lieth at the door." It is as silly as it is wicked to say, "Let us do evil that good may come." The apostle Paul observed or anticipated this disposition to error when he said "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The purest principles of grace do not gainsay this order of things. We are not practically to say with the Stoics of old that fate or destiny determines all things. The admission of such a notion would

engulf human responsibility, and our free-agency would only be a feather floating on the stream of inevitable necessity. Then to strive or pray to avert an evil or obtain a good were lost time and labour; Isa. xlv. 20. But it is plain that God has laid us under obligations to his declared will, and that, in bestowing grace to incline us to obedience, he does not supersede but concur with our responsibility. Grace disposes but does not force to that which is good; and, if the believer in Christ forget his responsibility and neglect to pray for divine strength, he will inevitably realize the bitter consequences in his own unhappy experience, and will speedily sink in the scale of moral character, though he may not be left to final apostasy.

Without entering into an extended detail of different actions and their respective consequences, we may just glance at a few particulars in which the consequences of our conduct may be considered both as they may terminate in ourselves and as they may involve others.

1. The consequences of our conduct require consideration as they may affect ourselves. For example,

1.) The exercise and cultivation of the gracious dispositions of your minds towards God will always be followed by great personal advantages. Here true happiness is enjoyed: delivered from annoying evil passions, "the peace of God possesses the heart and mind through Jesus Christ;" while love and praise assimilate us to the divine likeness, which is the very essence of bliss, differing only in degree from that enjoyed above. These are the divine harbingers of eternal peace and tranquillity: "Great peace have those who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." The hallowing of God's sabbaths and institutions carries a blessing into every day in the week; and, so long as harmony and sacred peace prevail within, the noise of the world will be heard only as remote commotions of the elements. The believer's "heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,"—"though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

On the contrary, "there is no peace to the wicked." The indulgence of carnal and ungodly dispositions is followed by loss and disadvantage, by bitter reflection, and forebodings of future consequences of a more serious nature. The breach of God's sabbaths and venerable institutions brings a curse with it; and the highest prosperity of the world cannot secure the transgressor from a thousand disquietudes. A dreadful sound may invade one ear while the charms of music salute the other. While Belshazzar revelled in luxury, a hand writing upon the wall made all his joints to tremble. Whether these consequences are immediate or remote, they are equally certain and dreadful; the dispositions of the mind lead to their corresponding issues to the individuals possessing them by a sovereign appointment that cannot err nor be controlled.

2.) The habitual exercise of temperance and self-denial cannot fail to produce the happiest consequences to ourselves. This is but putting a wholesome restraint on the very worst principles of our nature. It involves the knowledge of our best interest, and is itself an important means of securing it. It is the holy determination of our will to the will of God, instead of the will of the flesh; it is to sow to the Spirit, to live independent of a never-satisfied appetite. Besides peace of mind, this is generally followed by health of body, which it is one of the surest means of promoting. This is

also the way to that noble independence to which those who waste their substance in "riotous living" must be utter strangers; while this temperance of body contributes its full share to the vigour of the mind. The apostle Paul was a noble example of Christian temperance (1 Cor. ix. 27), which there can be no doubt contributed to spread a lustre over his whole character.

But self-gratifications and acts of intemperance, lust, or intoxication, these very rapidly bring poverty, sorrow, and disease. It would seem almost an offence to name such things, considering the persons I am addressing; but those who know the depths of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, and the frailties of our nature, will not think cautions unnecessary. Therefore, I say, "flee youthful lusts," carnal and fleshly appetites, "which war against the soul." Beware of small indulgences; the most shameful excesses have commenced at what we call innocent indulgences; particularly, many a preacher has become a drunkard by kind friends administering ardent spirits after preaching: this is, to say the best of it, a cruel piece of kindness. Other very kind friends will give an invitation, and will importune something beyond temperance: thus the Lord's people become tempters of one another. These baits are too often successful, to the ruin of the preacher and the scandal of the cause. Now, my dear friends, take care of these tempters, and tempting things; put your eyes and your palates under a very strong law: weak laws manifest weak governors. It is a common saying that "Parsons love good eating and drinking." I had rather it were said, "Parsons are the most temperate of mankind." And how favourable this is to studies upon divine things you know very well. Now what I wish of you is this: Consider consequences.

3.) In considering the personal happiness which springs from a well-regulated course of conduct, I cannot omit the habit of industry. No man is so happy as the truly industrious minister. The acquisition of knowledge has an irresistible charm to an ingenious mind; here luxury is found, and here the truest treasure. But, to secure this end, too much time must not be given to sleep, to talkative impertinent friends, to visiting, to politics. Inroads made upon your time will be like the Amalekites; they will consume even the property you have with much care collected together. An idle minister not only robs himself of one great source of delight, but on every emergency he must be ever scraping together what others have written and said, and will secure no other reputation than that of a retailer of scraps, ill assorted and worse put together.

The Turks say "that a busy man may be troubled with one devil, but the idle is tormented with a thousand." "The most sluggish of creatures, called the potto, or sloth, is also the most horrible for its ugliness—to show the deformity of idleness, and, if possible, to frighten us from it." Idleness has no memorial: every thing perishes with him, except the rags he leaves to his heirs. Some of our greatest writers would have left no vestige of their greatness if they had not been aroused from their habitual idleness by a very powerful motive, for they never wrote a line until they were starved to it; and, strange as it may appear, there are preachers who would never compose a sermon if their wants did not compel them. Such people are driven to duty like lazy school-boys; but the industrious man is always ready for his work. Now, my brethren, as to industry and idleness, consider consequences.

“Be wise, then, Christian, while you may,
For swiftly time is flying ;
The idle man, that sleeps to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.”

Think of the imperishable names that industrious ministers have obtained, such as Owen, Manton, Howe, Tillotson, Henry, Pool, Doddridge, Dwight, Fuller, &c. If the works of these men had never seen the light, yet they would have been happy in their labours ; for *labor ipse voluptas*.

2. We should consider the consequences of our conduct as they affect others as well as ourselves. This consideration is more particularly applicable to public men. Every act of a king, of a privy councillor, a senator, a judge, a physician, or a minister of God's word, has a good or bad effect on others. On the pilot depends the safety of the passengers, on the captain their comforts, on the minister, under Christ, devolves the care of immortal souls. Good or bad doctrines, good or bad examples, lively or frigid services, involve the people in consequences of incalculable moment. A minister's knowledge or ignorance, his love or indifference, his wisdom or folly, passes over to the people, or is engrafted on the congregation by an almost necessary consequence. I do not say that a minister forms the character of the people altogether, but he certainly bears an important part towards it. Hence the apostle Paul says, in a style and manner of unusual solemnity even for him, “Take heed, therefore (you under-shepherds), to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood.”

I now beg leave to refer to such a general state of your thoughts as I conceive will be the best security for the correctness of your public acts as ministers of the gospel. A correct course of thought will produce a correct course of conduct. These thoughts are the “seeds of things,” the germ of what is to be produced ; if, therefore, you would have any actions worth a memorial beyond the moment that produced them, consider the consequences of your thoughts, and that “a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” This is the irreversible order of things, and Solomon says, “Out of the heart are the issues of life,” the issues of wisdom and the streams of usefulness. It is a difficult thing to get people to begin here. It is too generally the fashion to commence with the regulation of their acts, and though some respect may here be had to the word and will of God, and the opinions of the pious, yet it is like an attempt to cast something into the stream to make it pure, when the purity of the fountain should be the first object of regard. Our Saviour says, “Make the tree good, and then its fruit will be good also.” From this source, as Dr. Blair very justly remarks, “all that makes a figure on the great theatre of the world, the employments of the busy, the enterprizes of the ambitious, and the exploits of the warlike, the virtues which form the happiness and the crimes which occasion the misery of mankind, originate in that silent and secret recess of thought which is hidden from every human eye.”

Now, my brethren, see that your thoughts are deeply impregnated with the love of Christ and of precious souls. Of this love it may truly be said, *à celo descendit*. Universal benevolence is very expressive of the word love, though it falls short : it is correct in this, that it expresses an act of

the will strongly bent upon a good design. This sets a Christian upon devising schemes of beneficence: "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." When a scheme is devised, well conceived, —a very benevolent, much-needed scheme—the next thing is to devise means that shall fit us for it, and to carry it into execution in the wisest and most effective manner. Your present preparatory studies for the ministry are of this nature, and you are to consider the consequences that will follow upon these means being wise or unwise.

Here, however, I must interpose a caution: there must be no delay. This caution has, indeed, been long since given: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;" set about it directly; "delays are dangerous." O how many schemes have been lost or marred by delays! It will be time enough to-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow, is a tune that lulls us to sleep; it is then we dream, like the drunkard, "When I awake I will seek it yet again." A scheme suspended is a forlorn hope—to-day it is legitimate, to-morrow it is the contrary. I thought thee fair and lovely, but now thy charms have vanished. No subject is more forcibly exhibited in the sacred scriptures than the folly of procrastination. "How long halt you between two opinions?" "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if you will hear his voice." "Work while it is called to day," &c. I have no doubt but Shakespeare's "tide in the affairs of men," like the chief of his admired sentences, was borrowed from the scriptures.

But, to return to consequences in reference to your preparatory studies, if you devote your time to studies that will yield comparatively no profit, that will not have a direct tendency to your usefulness to your hearers, that can at best only add some embellishments or ornaments to you as polite preachers, the consequences of such an unhappy employment of time will be severely felt by those whose benefit you profess to seek. If, for instance, you spend that part of your time upon acquiring or improving in the learned languages which ought to be given to the attainment of the first principles of preaching, there will be a sad perversion of things. The art of conveying instruction is in this case the "one thing needful;" and you may be a workman that need not be ashamed though you should be acquainted with no other language than your mother tongue. A critical knowledge of the languages was of great importance at the time of the Reformation, and is still of importance to academic tutors, to those who address learned hearers, and especially to those whose particular station calls upon them to defend the great outworks of our common Christianity, though even in this last case fitness consists more in the natural faculty of reasoning than in any extensive acquaintance with classic lore. But to the majority of preachers the learned languages are secondary accomplishments only. Their business is to preach Christ, and to lay a solid foundation, in the first principles of our faith, among the great bulk of our immense population, ninety-nine out of every hundred of whom are dazzled rather than instructed by what is called a splendid discourse.*

* [This paragraph is to be regretted. It is extremely one-sided and unfair. The scholar uses his knowledge of language to acquire information, and to bring it forth with greater simplicity. Nor are the best scholars the least effective preachers, or the least diligent pastors, but the contrary. 'Splendid discourses' usually proceed from the greater educated.]

If, in the first instance, you bend the energies of your minds, and give your thoughts to become useful men, the consequences will be most felicitous. In this course be wise, patient, and persevering; and if, after these objects shall be obtained, some further acquaintance with the languages can be acquired, without interfering with pulpit exercises, or too much interrupting your lawful engagements, there can be no objections.

Give your thoughts very closely to the best examples, wherever they are to be found, and this will supersede the necessity of my touching upon several things which might here have obtained a place. You will see the love and meekness that governed your blessed Lord: his were "thoughts of mercy and peace." "What love through all his actions ran!" What labours and self-denials did it lay upon him! So that even in this view it were well for us to "look to Jesus." Nothing but his spirit, I mean the mind that was in him so eminently, can ever do great things.

Secondly: Never suffer the consideration of *present consequences* to deter you from the faithful discharge of known duty, or induce any, even the smallest, compromise of your principles. This is no more than saying, Consider consequences in their widest range, as they include the whole of your existence. Yet this caution may not be unnecessary. Our views of consequences are apt to induce unwarrantable fears: "There is a lion in the street;" and here is the check that philanthropy or benevolence receives. "The principle (say these over-cautious ones) is good, but its practice is sometimes attended with danger; many have lost their worldly comforts, their good name—nay, their lives have been sacrificed to it." If universal approbation and immediate advantage spread the sails, if all-propitious winds invited embarkation, and rich mines awaited our arrival out, then we should have as many philanthropists as fortune-hunters; they would, however, be of a most suspicious character, and where virtue or true worth was to be found in the crowd nobody could tell. But now things are by Infinite Wisdom put upon a better footing. Here is a fair trial of principle, of courage, of true Christian fortitude and magnanimity. Here that noble daring to be singular—that intrepid purpose which nothing can intimidate or turn aside—finds its exercise. Here distinction of character is fairly marked out, and rewards of a suitable nature, at a suitable time, will be conferred by unerring hands on those who, by faith and patience, will wait for them, and who, in doing what is right, are fearless of consequences.

We must also distinguish between probable and imaginary consequences. Upon the former we may make a tolerably accurate calculation; but in reference to the latter we may be like children going to bed, afraid of ghosts and hobgoblins, when we ought to commit ourselves to God. "Commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established." Such consequences as these may affright us:—"If I follow such a course I shall be persecuted, or at least laughed at; I shall be called one of the saints; or if I preach in such a manner I shall displease the people; if I preach such a doctrine I shall give offence; if I speak thus faithfully such a character will be offended, and he has the principal direction or is the chief support of the place." Now these and many such like fears we ought to discard altogether. "He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" Our Lord spoke some very severe things against these improper fears: "I will tell you whom you

should fear ; fear him that has power to cast you into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him." And, in truth, such fears are as foolish as they are sinful ; for, in the first place, the thing apprehended may never come to pass, or, instead of your fortitude and courage being a drawback upon your interests, your interests may thereby be promoted.* The lines of an overruling Providence are here so often visible that no mistake need be made : the timorous are ruined, and the bold are saved and blessed, even in this world.

Nothing is more common than for those who look at present consequences, without sufficiently weighing the future, to defeat their own purpose. Presuming upon consequences, that they certainly will happen in such a particular way, is the vice of ardent minds, and often becomes a source of subsequent regrets. We have no right to presume upon any thing but what God promises.† As to taking a settlement over a church, you will find it well to weigh consequences. Presuming upon present appearances, many too hastily engage themselves. Be not hasty in trusting to new and untried friends, the fair speeches of weathercock hearers, who may possibly extol you to-day and defame you to-morrow. Know, as much as possible, "what is in man," and presume not upon the continuance of favourable gales.

The balancing and comparing of contrary consequences is however often too delicate a thing for our management ; and too much of this balancing will very likely end in forming a cunning character—a selfish disposition. It is the safest way to take all the care possible to ascertain whether our thoughts and devices be right, suitable, and seasonable ; but, if we must proceed to balancing, let us wholly discard selfish considerations and beware of an undue weight in favour of present things, taking Moses for our guide, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for (in balancing his account of consequences) he had respect to the recompense of reward."

* Let me here remind you of an anecdote which was thought worthy of a place in Bishop Horne's Essays. In the reign of Charles II. a court was to be held at Winchester. The king was to be lodged with one of the clergy, not very high in rank, but whose house was commodious. He was very happy to receive the king, but he most positively refused to admit Nell Gwynne, the king's mistress. He was deaf to all entreaty and remonstrance, and to every representation of consequences. Refuse he did, and another lodging was provided for the lady. Some time afterwards a valuable bishopric was vacant. Interest was made for this and that great divine, but the king enquired, "What is the name of that little fellow at Winchester that would not admit Nell Gwynne into his house ? He is an honest fellow, and he shall have the appointment."

† A preacher of high celebrity had at one time prepared a discourse with which he was enraptured. Every hour was a day till the happy time should come for its delivery ; when, lo ! instead of the bliss he had anticipated, he felt his mind in a state of wretchedness and barrenness. He looked at the clock with anxiety for the moment that would permit him to hide himself from the disgrace which he supposed he had incurred by such a total failure. Now, though his anticipations were not realized in the precise way he expected, yet good was done by the sermon ; for one of his people sought him out whither he had retired to vent his lamentations, and addressed him in some such words as these : "Oh ! Sir, you have, under God, been made the means of restoring my soul to comfort." "Well," says the minister, "whatever it may have done for you, I know it has brought great trouble upon myself, and I am perfectly ashamed of my sermon."

LECTURE XIX.

TOPIC XIV.

REFLECT ON THE END PROPOSED IN AN EXPRESSION OR ACTION.

THE holy scriptures not only offer to our attention the most interesting facts, and the most vivid exhibitions of character, which in themselves are quite easy of comprehension, but also many things of greater difficulty. Some passages, which as teachers of others it is highly important for us to understand, have, through lapse of time, contracted a dubious character. For example, from our present ignorance of ancient manners, and of the peculiar turn of thought which was formerly familiar on several subjects, an obscurity arises in the sense of some texts; and in order that we may fix correctly on the truths which they exhibit, and render them, so to speak, tangible to the people, we must use all the means which lie within our reach. Reference to the original text, collation of different translations, lexicons, dissertations, commentaries, &c., will frequently afford valuable assistance. But I am convinced that those who have not the opportunity to avail themselves of such helps may make very considerable proficiency, in the study of even the more difficult parts of scripture, by a close attention to the considerations suggested by the several topics, and particularly that which now demands our attention. This is in fact a master-key to the understanding of many things in profane as well as in the inspired writings; and hence the maxim of Pope—

“In every work consult the author’s end.”

“If, for example, you were speaking of justification, in the sense in which St. Paul taught it, you might observe the *ends* which the apostle proposes, as, 1. To put a just difference between Jesus Christ and Moses, the law and the gospel; and to show, against those who would blend them together, and so confound both in one body of religion, that they cannot be so united. 2. To preserve men from that pharisaical pride which reigned among the Jews, who sought to establish their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of God. 3. To take away such inadequate remedies as the law by way of shadow exhibited for the expiation of sins, as sacrifices and purifications, as well as those which pagan superstition proposed, such as washing in spring water, offering victims to their gods, &c. 4. To bring men to the true and only atonement for sin, which is the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Such is Claude’s illustration of this Topic, which is quite sufficient to show its importance, and perhaps sufficient also to assist the well-furnished student in applying it with advantage. But to those whose resources are more slender a few general remarks, as exemplifications of the Topic, will, I doubt not, prove acceptable. I have had occasion to point out a similarity between some of the Topics, but I confess I do not perceive, in the present Topic, that similarity to the Topic of Principles which Claude intimates. He says, “The end proposed is not very different to the way of principles, though it may afford variety in discussing them.” But I humbly conceive that though in some particulars there is a similarity, yet the two Topics are in fact very different. The principle of a word or action is its philosophy,

its rationale ; it fixes the mind on something in which such word or action originated, or in consequence of which a thing is so said or done, and here it terminates. But the end proposed has a different province, and fixes our thoughts on the final object which the word or action was intended to promote. The former supposes that the true meaning of a text is already clear, and its object is to show the justness, propriety, or excellency of it, &c., and to generalize a particular subject. The latter proposes to assist in discovering the true meaning of a text by referring to the intention of the writer, the end which he had in view.

When treating on the twelfth Topic I observed that the scriptures, as a whole, proceed on the principle that man is a fallen and degraded creature. Let us now examine what is the end proposed in the inspired volume generally. It certainly has its end as well as its principle, though perhaps in such a comprehensive view it is difficult to be precise enough to be edifying, and difficult to preserve the eye from diverging, because the object is large, and one will think the centre here and another will say, "Nay, it is there." However, it may be sufficiently correct for our present purpose to observe that the main design of the whole scripture, or the end proposed by Jehovah in imparting to sinful man this revelation of mercy, is that he may reconcile sinners unto himself, and raise them from their present degradation to glory, honour, and immortality. See Rom. xv. 4 : 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Hence it is that a Saviour is the great object every where exhibited. In types and shadows, in the descriptions of prophecy, as well as in the New Testament records, he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the sum and substance of all holy writ. This he himself declares, John v. 39, 46 ; and certainly if there had been no covenant of redemption—no covenant of grace in Christ—we cannot suppose there would have been any scriptures at all.

If any difficulty present itself in the interpretation of any book of scripture, or its minuter parts, it may very frequently be solved by an attention to our present Topic, because, as every writer has some design, some end which he proposed to himself, and as it is not to be supposed that he would express himself in terms foreign to that design, it is reasonable to conclude that all his words and phrases are such as were every way in accordance with his purpose. To be acquainted therefore with the scope of his writing, or the end which he had in view, is to possess a key to all he says. This, it has been well observed, is the soul or spirit of a book ; and, that being once ascertained, every argument and every word appear in their right place and are perfectly intelligible ; but, if the scope be not duly considered, every thing becomes obscure, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be. "Hence," as observed by Dr. Burder, "how unfair, how irrational, how arbitrary is the mode of interpretation which many apply to the word of God ! They insulate a passage ; they fix on a sentence ; they even detach it from the paragraph to which it belongs, and explain it in a sense dictated only by the combination of the syllables or the words in themselves considered. If the word of God be thus dissected or tortured, what language may it not seem to speak ? What sentiments may it not appear to countenance ? What fancy may it not be made to gratify ? But would such a mode of interpretation be tolerated by any living author ? Would such a method be endured in commenting on the admired productions of classical antiquity ? Yet in this case it would be comparatively harmless, although utterly indefensible ; but who can calculate the amount

of injury which may be sustained by the cause of revealed religion if its pure streams be thus defiled?"

Begging the student to remember that we are only treating of a few difficult passages, and that we still maintain that the chief parts, say forty-nine parts out of fifty, have no need of scope, or any thing else of the kind, to make them plainer than they now stand in the sacred text, we observe that the scope of an author is either general or particular: by the former we mean the end which he proposed to himself in writing his book, by the latter the end which he had in view when writing particular sections or even sentences which his book may contain; and we unite them together in design, because the same rules will apply to the whole and to its parts.

The scope or intention of a book of scripture, as well as of any particular section, may generally be collected from some one of the following sources:—

1. From the author's express mention of it in some part of his book. Thus the wise man declares, at the beginning of his books, that the design of the former is to teach wisdom (Prov. i. 1—4), and that of the latter to set forth the vanity of all earthly things, Eccles. i. 1—3. Sometimes this is found in other parts of the book, as 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance," &c. Thus also John, in the gospel which bears his name, says, "These things have I written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing, you might have life through his name." In all such cases we have the most satisfactory assurance respecting the great end which the sacred writers had in view; and whatever is doubtful or ambiguous must be explained in a sense corresponding with their professed design.

2. From some declaration which exhibits the reason or occasion of any portion of a book being written, as at the beginning of many of the psalms, which are so plain as to require no citation. The language of the apostle, in the seventh chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, is of this kind: "Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me," &c. Here we see that it was not the intention of the apostle to write against marriage generally, but to recommend celibacy rather on the principle of expediency, as more suitable to the distressed and persecuted state of the church. The notion of celibacy which the Romanists collect from this portion of the word of God arises therefore from a mistake as to the apostle's general design.

3. From considerations arising out of the state of the people to whom the writing was originally addressed, according to the tenth and eleventh Topics.* Thus you will discern the scope of the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, by attending to the distressed state of the people addressed. It was a state too trying for some weak members of the scattered church, and quite trying enough for the strongest. Apostasies had occurred, and seemed likely to recur; he therefore assembles all the high considerations to form his subject which were likely to affect and to preserve those that were left to him. This view of things will also equally suit the epistle of James and the first of Peter; and in preaching upon or from these epistles it will sometimes be necessary to point this out to the people, perhaps making it the matter of the exordium.

4. From the known errors of the times. After these had been the sub-

* See Lecture XVI.

ject of warnings by the Spirit of prophecy, they became the subject of animadversion in the true spirit of the ministry. Now, besides other instances, it is sufficient to notice St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians against the return to Judaism, or that of St. John against antichrist in his first hideous form. It is hence we perceive the force of many expressions as well as their true meaning ; and at the same time we have examples how to animadvert on the errors of the present times.

5. From some conclusions expressly drawn from any argument. These are very frequent in the apostolic writings, and possess the same force as the express mention of their design. Thus Paul says : " Therefore we see that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ," from which conclusion it is quite evident that the apostle did not mean to lead us into an expectation of being accepted or justified by our works, but simply through faith in Christ. Hence we see that works are to follow faith, and not to lead to the object for which faith is established.

6. From the general drift and tenour of a book, which must be ascertained by an extensive and well connected view of a whole epistle, &c. This is confessedly difficult, but in some cases it is necessary. Mr. Carpenter lays down this point highly to his own credit and the benefit of the student :—" Such epistle should be read, and re-read, from beginning to end ; and it is preferable to use a copy in this case where the text is not divided into chapters and verses." If this cannot be had let the student dismiss from his mind, or prohibit his eyes from the observance of such divisions ; for they are but of modern date, and have their evils as well as their benefits. " Such epistle should be read as we would peruse an epistle from a friend, and that three or four times over, without interruption, until the whole letter becomes clear. From this perusal, re-perusal, and repetition of the document, we shall obtain a right knowledge of the scope the author had in writing it, and an acquaintance with the general argument of the epistle. For, as it has been well remarked, the composition of every such work, however loose and imperfect, cannot have been fortuitous ; we know that by some exertion of mind it has been put together, and we discover in its connections, such as they are, indications of the purpose for which the exertion was made. According to the tendency of the composition may the reference be safely made to its purpose." These remarks will generally apply ; but in some cases might not the apostles write so much for general purposes as to preserve no connexion in the parts of an epistle that might lead to its elucidation from a reference to the general tenour of the whole ? I cannot see any one particular end proposed by Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, though the parts of which it consists, and the apostle's intentions in introducing them, are clear enough ; and the same may be said of the Epistle to the Philippians. In no other way, indeed, does Mr. Roberts, in his valuable *Key to the Bible*, discover a scope in the former epistle.

Wherever a particular design or intention can be discovered, in any of the ways just mentioned, it will generally furnish observations calculated to illustrate the meaning and force of the passage to which it refers, and ought by no means to be overlooked ; and, whether we use a passage as the foundation of a discourse or as a quotation only, it must never be used in any sense inconsistent with such design. As there is what we call common honesty in commercial affairs, so there is such a thing as common honesty in pulpit affairs ; and it becomes us never to handle the word of God igno-

rantly nor deceitfully. It is true we might practice upon the weakness and credulity of a congregation; there might be no spies or informers; the fallacy might be received and swallowed down with avidity, as a wholesome scripture truth, and there may be people so vitiated in their tastes and understandings as to look out for men who will, by such manglings of scripture, provide them with the only venison they can relish; but where is truth all this while? Alas! the truth is not in the text, or the quotation, separately, but in the scope of the whole context, or book.

If, however, no particular scope be apparent, our interpretation of doubtful passages must be governed by the general scope of the whole New Testament—the truth as it is in Jesus—the analogy of faith; and, having mentioned the analogy of faith, I shall here take the opportunity to add that it is a kind of appeal to the whole testimony of sacred writ, as St. Paul, in reference to the sentiment or doctrine he was writing about, appeals: “For what saith the scripture,” &c., Rom. iv. 3, &c. Here he rests his argument upon the general basis of scripture. Mr. Horne defines this analogy to be the constant and perpetual harmony of scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice. He says it is what St. Paul calls “the proportion of faith,” and which should be translated the analogy of faith. To the same effect many commentators interpret St. Peter’s maxim (2 Pet. i. 20), that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation,” implying that the sense of any prophecy is not to be determined by an abstract consideration of the passage itself, but taking it in conjunction with other portions of scripture relating to the subject, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. ii. 13), a rule which, though it be especially applicable to the prophetic writings, is also of general importance in the exposition of the sacred volume. And he quotes from Bishop Van Mildart three terms which appear to be synonymous with the analogy of faith, as Rom. ii. 20: “The form of knowledge;” the grand scheme and draught of all true knowledge. Rom. vi. 17: “The form” or mould “of doctrine” into which the Christians were cast. And 2 Tim. i. 13: “The form of sound words.” Upon the above observations the whole doctrine of analogy is built, and the student must proceed accordingly, praying earnestly for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, without which we shall always be in danger of perverting the truth, or of misapplying its several parts. The parallel passages will generally assist upon these points, and particularly the context should be regarded.

We have seen that the considerations suggested by this Topic are of great importance in determining the true meaning of the sacred writers; and perhaps I cannot better exemplify its use in sermonizing than by offering a few remarks on some of those institutions the true nature of which can be understood only in proportion as the end proposed in their establishment is regarded.

First: The Christian ministry, as appointed by our Lord, falls so directly in my way that I cannot entirely pass it over. It should be our constant aim to preserve the office in its purity, and to be ourselves what our Lord and Master expects and requires us to be. What then was the end proposed in its establishment? Was it intended to form a hierarchy, a dominating power, governing according to the rules of civil policy? Did our Lord intend that it should be rendered subservient to the purposes of human ambition, that ministers should become lords over his heritage and

enjoy princely titles and princely revenues? If this be the case, you have certainly usurped an office to which you can lay no claim. But what does the Lord say? "My kingdom is not of this world." "Be not you called Rabbi, or master: for one is your master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." These and other passages, and more particularly when taken in their connexion, certainly intimate that the gospel dispensation knows nothing of ecclesiastical rulers and a temporal head: indeed, had our Lord intended to caution his messengers against all such establishments, he could not have employed language more appropriate or forcible. The end proposed in the appointment of the ministry may be readily understood from the words of Christ: "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." From this commission it is evident that the design of Christ was the promulgation of the truth by proper agents and suitable means. Nor are we left to discover by human wisdom either the character of the agents or the nature of the means to be employed; both are sufficiently pointed out in the New Testament: and we have only to look at the pages of ecclesiastical history in order to perceive the evil consequences of substituting human authority instead of the directions of God's word, and perverting the institutions of Christ from their original design.

The real power of the gospel coalesces only with its own simplicity, and every departure from that simplicity is of necessity injurious. We never saw a revival of piety but with the return of simplicity;* for though we have had new sects established by great and learned men, who have been very far from simplicity, yet it is a fact which may well bring down the pride of man that every real revival of primitive Christianity has originated with men whose education and habits have circumscribed them within comparatively narrow limits;† and as soon as the reviving party, dissatisfied with its bounds, and the contempt usually experienced, breaks into the wide expanse of fashionable religion again, then the true character of Christ's ministers is once more lost in the crowd.

Here then is the rule of judgment as to Christ's appointment of the ministry, and the end proposed in it. Whatever agrees with this end in Christian teachers is right, and all that does not agree with it is wrong; and no existing examples, however extensive and imposing, ought to have any influence upon us. Whatever be the opinions of mankind as to what respectability requires in the ministry, it is certain that true respectability will never be wanting where the great end of the institution is kept practically in view.

* Luther, Calvin, &c., upon the continent, and our reformers in England, were good and learned men; but they were not so much revivers of spiritual religion as reformers, correctors, purifiers of gross evils; they were great and honourable men, raised up and fitted for a particular purpose: but our reviving preachers have only to do with common ignorance, common sin, and unbelief, to preach Christ in all simplicity and faithfulness. [It is not possible to accept this note as historic truth.]

† The late very learned Horne Tooke, in his latter days, resided near Wimbledon, Surrey, not far from the spot where our itinerants had for some time preached with great plainness of speech. Mr. Tooke sent for them, and said: "Here is fifty pounds towards improving your chapel, and I will further give a life subscription; for I consider your manner of proceeding the nearest to that of the apostles of any thing that I have ever heard or read of."

Secondly : The end proposed in the sabbath, now called the Lord's day, deserves notice in this place. This is one of those positive institutions that connects itself so closely with the Christian ministry that they must rise or fall together. Much may be done towards convincing a lax and degenerate people of the importance of the sabbath by our Topic, as Mark ii. 27 : "The sabbath was made for man ; not man for the sabbath." Man was made before the sabbath was instituted ; hence we have the induction that settles the point, for "that which was instituted for the sake of another thing must yield to the good of that for the sake of which it was instituted ;" hence our Lord's expression is justified. It is true the injunction of a sabbath has all the force of a moral obligation ; for though, as a positive institution, it does not come to us under that notion, yet, as we are under a moral obligation generally to obey our Maker's expressed will, it comes to the same point as if it had been originally of a moral nature. In our Lord's expression, however, the morality of the observance is not formally insisted on, but only the end proposed—the good of man in his fallen state. It is a boon of heaven, a high and distinguished privilege, without which man's moral character and religious identity would soon sink into that barbarism which actually exists among all people who are either in a state of ignorance, or who wilfully neglect its obligation and advantages altogether. The end proposed in the Lord's day (for this is the proper Christian appellation) should therefore be urged by all the arguments that can be drawn from man's personal interests, and the gracious design of our Lord in giving his sanction to its observance by honouring the two first days of the first two weeks subsequent to his resurrection, by appearing among his disciples, and pronouncing his blessing upon them, as we collect from the gospel history. Here we see that the perfected scheme of salvation stands connected with our Lord's resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week, without which there could have been no gospel to preach, no acceptance with God for any service whatever, whether of a moral or positive nature, such as we could render in our fallen state. Now, the announcement of the Lord's day and the announcement of salvation are heard in perfect harmony ; while the very institution itself is the fairest type of that eternal sabbath of rest which all desire to obtain, but which those only will enjoy who are disciplined into the uses and benefits of the Lord's day on earth.

If we are to subdue the vulgar notion that the observance of the Lord's day is a painful yoke, it must be by the present Topic, by showing that the institution was made for man, that it is not an arbitrary appointment, nor a useless exertion of wanton power, contrived only to display the authority of the master and to embitter the subjection of the slave ; but a kind and benignant indulgence, to be called on this day into the more immediate presence of our heavenly Father, to know his will, which is only another term for our happiness. This plan is commonly more likely to succeed than harsher language, than even moral argument ; for, as Bishop Horsley observes (to whom I am indebted for some ideas in this article), "Our Saviour's method of instruction was not by delivering a system of morality, in which the formal nature of the moral good should be traced to the original idea of the seemly and the fair, the foundations of our duty (or its principles) discovered in the natural relations of things, and the importance of every particular duty demonstrated by its connexion with general happiness. This was not his method of instruction, because he well knew how long it

had been followed with little effect; for abstruse speculations, whatever they may have at the bottom of solidity and truth, suit not the capacities of the many and influence the heart of none. He took therefore that course which experience pointed out to be the easiest way to persuade, as well as the shortest, by putting the question on the footing of advantage."

Thirdly: The end Christ had in view in his two ordinances, of Baptism and the Supper, is of great importance to a correct appreciation of their nature. With regard to the former, I take it for granted that your minds are pretty well made up as to its object, mode, and expediency, and shall not here offer any remarks upon it. As to the latter, however, a few observations may not be inappropriate, particularly as bearing upon the interpretation of scripture.

The Roman Catholics say that in the mass they perpetuate or renew the sacrifice of Christ, alleging the words "This is my body"—"This is my blood." The reception of the literal sense of these words however would lead to an absurdity as great as that he really was a "vine" or a "door." I think we only want a little common sense to see that this gross perversion of a passage of scripture is only resorted to in order to establish a system which could not subsist without it. A great share of the revenues and theatrical pomp of the Romish Church is derived from this doctrine. The rule to judge upon such a passage is, before we can conclude upon the sense of a text so as to prove anything by it we must be sure that such sense does not involve a contradiction. Revealed truth may be above reason, but that which is contrary to reason can no more be true and agreeable to the revelation contained in the sacred writings than God (who is the author of one as well as of the other) can contradict himself. Hence it is evident that the words of Jesus Christ, "This is my body"—"This is my blood," are not to be understood in that sense which favours the doctrine of transubstantiation, because it is impossible that contradictions should be true, and we cannot be more certain that any thing is true than we are that that doctrine is false.* Now, as we are called upon to make strenuous efforts not only to convert Catholics, but to prevent others from embracing so corrupt a form of Christianity, these remarks may be useful. The ordinance of the Supper is not a "bloody sacrifice."

Our English church calls the ordinance a sacrament, upon the supposition that in taking it solemnly at the altar we do implicitly engage ourselves by an oath, or vow, as to our future obedience to Christ. If our vows were or could be of any value, if they could afford any security as to our future pure and holy conduct, I think our sacramental idea would be valuable; but such is the weakness of humanity and the power of temptation, and such the nature of a broken vow, that I submit whether it be not safest to retain the vow, but still with all might to resist evil with the advantages God gives us, and in the strength of Christ to do all that we can, even to the uttermost. But I conceive that the words of the institution do not warrant this term sacrament, however well intended. If ever there was or had been a time more important for a solemn engagement than others, the moment of the supper was such a time, when the apostles were about to pass into a situation of trial truly awful, and which in the event proved how unequal these disciples were to keep a vow inviolate. One would think our Sa-

* Rev. Prebendary Horne.

viour in compassion saved his disciples from the breach of a vow and its guilt together, by not enforcing it upon them. And it is clear that no solemn engagement was required at that time, nor do we read of anything of this nature being added subsequently by the apostles, not even as a practice of expediency without injunction. I fear, if we were allowed to refer for the usage to the early ages after the apostles' time, we should open too wide a door to innovations ; for it is certain that errors in abundance soon crept into the church. But I say all this with great deference to the eminent characters of our church who have written and defended the term. However, it is now pretty generally agreed that to take the "sacrament" as a qualification for office, and often by persons who do not usually appear to pay reverence to religion, is a very awful abuse and perversion of a sacred institution.* To me it appears that the Lord's Supper is purely a commemorative ordinance, and that the end in view on the part of our Saviour was to perpetuate the remembrance of his love in dying for us. "Do this in remembrance of me." This is inclusive of everything we ought to do ; it has all the force of moral obligation as well as of gratitude, and is exclusive of every thing else, even by way of amendment. In this case, as though our Lord foresaw how the future zeal of his people might go beyond his injunctions, he would oppose a timely check to it in these expressive words, "Do this in remembrance of me,"—this do and no more : this being properly done will answer the purpose designed. It is officious to go beyond this plain precept, or to make it any thing else than commemorative. We must neither add nor diminish ; for if we do either we indirectly cast a reflection upon the wisdom of the institutor.

Other divines call this ordinance eucharistical, and certainly I like this notion better the sacramental. A eucharistical ordinance, or this notion concerning it, is adopted from the thank-offerings of the Jewish church. Most certainly a "thankful remembrance of Christ's death"† is very proper, but thankfulness is only an adjunct which ought to stand connected with all we do (Col. iii. 17) ; the ordinance itself is, and ought to be, memorative. Its type, the paschal-feast, exactly answers this idea. The Hebrew nation were ordered by the passover to preserve God's wonderful deliverance in their minds to all generations.

Others, to be quite sure, unite the sacramental and eucharistical ideas, but here is no predominant point on which to fix the mind ; comprehending so many ideas, the whole is weakened or destroyed. However, every one must think for himself ; and I shall give presently a sketch of a discourse that treats of the Supper under three distinct ideas. I think our national church, though she calls the ordinance a sacrament, yet fully admits the commemorative and eucharistical ideas ; and, when it is considered how many there were to please at the Reformation, it is not wonderful that distinctness was lost to the view, nor that many things should find a place in the system which were incompatible with the simplicity of the gospel.

Fourthly : The end or design of God in calling his people out of the world is worthy of your attentive consideration. You will have frequent occasion to refer to it in the course of your ministry, and it is a topic

* The act of parliament imposing the sacrament on taking certain offices is now happily repealed.

† Church Catechism.

replete with instruction and encouragement to yourselves as "workers together with God." The end proposed by the Almighty is to save his people through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Hence it is declared that Christ "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In strict accordance with this the apostle Peter, addressing his Christian brethren, says, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Though it is the people's care to exemplify this character, and to the people it was addressed, yet the formation of the character is instrumentally committed to the preacher; for it is he that is "to feed the flock of God" with such wholesome truths as are calculated to produce the character intended. By example, by precept, by representation, by excitement, by vigilance, he is to be always aiming at the end proposed. The faithful, anxious minister will sometimes be consulting with himself in some such manner as this: "What additions have I brought into Christ's church? What solicitude has been manifested to preserve them, to strengthen their graces, to increase their knowledge, to improve their holiness, to caution and arm them against danger? What increase of piety, of Christian love and zeal, has been produced by my discourses to them? Are the people more spiritual and heavenly in their conversation?" Now this is no small charge upon a preacher; it carries with it great responsibilities, so much so that thinking, conscientious men often cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

If the sanctification of his people is the end proposed by Christ in calling them out of the world, this end should go with the preacher into the pulpit or desk, should suggest to him his duty there, and direct him to topics of discourse, that he may be a helper together with Christ, the chief Shepherd, in bringing home his wanderers, and in supporting and cherishing the weak of the flock. He will thus be concerned to show himself a faithful servant, at every hand; he will be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, wisdom to the simple, and a friend to all.

I am aware that the preacher has, on entering the pulpit, a great many things to think of: still the claim before us, the end proposed, cannot be waived or lost sight of. This would be like the barrister abandoning or forgetting the interest of his client, or the ambassador omitting the main point of his instructions at a foreign court. Let therefore this thought be habitual, and the main point will be secured. The end in view, in preaching the gospel, was and is the calling of sinners to make them saints.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to point out the usefulness of this Topic in assisting us to discover the true sense of scripture, and, for the sake of illustration, have briefly considered the end proposed in the appointment of the Christian ministry, in the positive institutions of the gospel, &c. In what follows I shall proceed to lay before you some examples in which the Topic forms the ground-work of division. Much, however, as I love variety in the construction of a sermon, and much as I have endeavoured to promote it, I would not add this form to the rest if I were not satisfied that it is well worthy of your attention; the following examples will, I think, be sufficient to show you that "the end proposed" will sug-

gest the best mode of treating many subjects ; while the particular end which you have in view must of course always regulate the form of division.

Mr. Davies, of America, in treating on the subject of the Lord's Supper, to which we have already referred, divides upon our Topic. The text is 1 Cor. v. 8 : "Let us keep the feast," &c. The author insists on the end proposed in the ordinance in the three following particulars :—

- I. It was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.
- II. It was appointed as a badge of our Christian profession, and of our being united to him.
- III. As a seal of the covenant of grace, both on God's part and also on ours.

These points he treats rather propositionally. The first part contains my sentiments ; as to the second part, I always thought that it was baptism which stood for the badge of our profession, and I also think that baptism has more to do with the covenant alluded to than the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Baptism is, I think, the proper initiatory ceremony, and more fitly so the more public it is ; but the Lord's Supper was first celebrated with closed doors.

In the illustration already quoted from Claude we have the end which the apostle Paul had in view in insisting on evangelical justification, which might be included in the following divisions :—

- I. To preserve men from pharisaical pride.
- II. To withdraw them from ceremonial observances.
- III. To bring them to the true and only atonement for sin.

Blair takes up this Topic in his sermon on Matt. xiii. 30 : "Let both grow together until the harvest." The doctor notices the mixture of bad men with the followers of God in the present state, and justifies the wisdom and equity of divine Providence in permitting it by showing that the real benefit of his people is the great end proposed in this permission. This he amplifies by considering the several subordinate ends which could not be so well answered if the tares were all rooted out by the vengeance of heaven. The following is an abstract of the doctor's sermon :—

The end proposed by Jehovah, in permitting the mixture of good and bad in the present state, is the real advantage of his people, which is thereby promoted,

I. In a way of discipline ; for it constitutes a state of trial well calculated to improve the character of God's people.

1. As it exercises their passive graces. Were there no bad men in the world to vex and distress the good, the good might appear in the light of harmless innocence, but could have no opportunity of displaying fidelity, magnanimity, patience, and fortitude. In our present imperfect state, if goodness constantly proceeded in a smooth and flowery path,—if, meeting with no adversary to oppose it, it were surrounded on every hand with acclamation and praise,—is there no ground to dread that it might be corrupted by vanity or might sink into indolence ? This dangerous calm must therefore be interrupted ; and wicked men are employed as instruments in the hands of God to rouse his servants from dangerous slumbers, to form them for the day of adversity, and to teach them how to suffer honourably.

2. As it serves to improve their active powers. It gives occasion for their graces to shine with conspicuous lustre, and makes them appear as "the lights of the world" amidst surrounding darkness. Were it not for the dangers that arise from abounding iniquity, many of our active powers would find no exercise ; there would be no opportunity for courage to act, for wisdom to admonish, for caution to watch, nor for faith to be exerted in "overcoming the world." The Christian is here to be trained and prepared for a paradise of innocence, and for the enjoyment of a perfect and faultless society ; and the wisdom of Providence appears in making the errors of the wicked subservient to the improvement of the just. For this end, therefore, tares are suffered at present to grow up among the wheat.

II. In a way of instruction. From the examples of wickedness by which they are surrounded the children of God derive many valuable lessons.

1. They are thus admonished concerning the snares of Satan. Tracing the dangerous and slippery paths by which so many have been led from small beginnings to commit the greatest crimes, and thus insensibly betrayed into ruin, they are admonished to be upon their watch-tower, their views of human nature are enlarged, and the sense of their imbecility is strongly impressed upon them, accompanied with the conviction of the necessity of constant dependence on an almighty arm. All the crimes which the servants of God behold disturbing society around them are so many signals hung out to them, beacons planted in their view, to prevent their making shipwreck among the rocks on which others have split.

2. They are further instructed, by the views thus exhibited, of the evil and deformity of sin. The odious character of sin never appears in so strong a light as when displayed in the crimes of the wicked.

3. Thus also are they repeatedly admonished that it is an "evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord." We need only to open our eyes to behold the wicked tormented by their passions, and far removed from that sanctuary of calmness and tranquillity which is the abode of happiness. Practical demonstrations of the infelicity of sin are constantly exhibited in the examples of evil doers; and the misery as well as infamy of guilt is realized and rendered sensible to our apprehensions.

When therefore you contemplate the important ends which are advanced, by permitting the tares to grow together with the wheat, you behold how the ways of God may, in this remarkable case, be justified to man.

This example is well suited to our purpose, as it is evidently formed throughout upon the Topic. The text, however, seems intended to discountenance and to forbid the intermeddling hand of man, and would lead us rather to show that *man ought not* to attempt the extirpation of the wicked than *why God does not* immediately destroy them. Some recent prosecutions in our law courts give importance to this subject. Are infidels to be permitted to blaspheme the name of Jesus, and to call his gospel a falsehood? Are our children and domestics to be poisoned in their principles by exhibitions of the titles of blasphemous books and advertisements in shop windows, and in the handbills that are thrown down into our areas? This is a very awful evil; it staggers us; our zeal fires, and we ask, Shall these things be suffered? If scripture is to settle the matter, it is settled: "Let both grow together until the harvest." If we prosecute, imprison, and fine these wicked characters, we do but follow the example and justify the acts of the inquisitionists. The zealous papist considers our doctrines as damnable as we consider those of Carlile or Taylor. True, there is a difference, but in both cases there is an interference which is interdicted. Christ could preserve the vessel in the storm, and Christ can preserve his church against all enemies. He can even bring good out of evil, and ever does so; and "evil men and seducers" will try their skill upon the established Christian in vain.

My next example is also from Blair, vol. ii., serm. 13, Eccles. vii. 2—4: "It is better to go to the house of mourning," &c. That is, viewing the end proposed, it is so. That end is the improvement of the heart: to this end the whole discourse inclines. It is a merely moral discourse, but as such his point is well sustained.

It is evident (observes the doctor) that the wise man does not prefer sorrow upon its own account to mirth, or represent sadness as a state more eligible than joy. He considers it in the light of discipline only. He views it with reference to an end. He compares it with certain improvements which he supposes it to produce, "for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." Now, if great and lasting benefits are found to result from visiting the house of mourning, these may be capable of giving it the preference to those seasons of fleeting joy which may be found in the

house of feasting. A proper attention to the distresses of life is, however, well calculated to produce very important effects on our moral and religious character; for,

- I. The house of mourning gives some check to levity.
- II. It awakens sentiments of piety.
- III. It arouses our sensibilities and sympathies towards sufferers.
- IV. It gives seasonable admonitions to prepare for what may soon be our own state.
- V. Excessive fondness for life will thereby be moderated.

Blair also furnishes an example in which the Topic occupies one part of the discourse. Rom. viii. 28: "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God," &c. His introduction is very beautiful:—"It was the opinion of many ancient philosophers that private and individual interests were sacrificed to the general good of all men. The gospel has opened to us a higher and more comfortable prospect. It assures us that while Jehovah is ever carrying on the general system of things to its proper perfection, the interest of no one good man is sacrificed in any point to promote this end, but his life is at the same time a system complete within itself, where all things are made to conspire for bringing about his felicity."

His first division contains some remarks in reference to the characters designated in the text, and some explanation as to what the *good* is which is designed for them. On the latter subdivision he has some very judicious observations upon human sentiment as to what *is good*; for here many things appear good to some which do not appear so to others. In the second part the discourse opens into the Topic: The overruling power that directs all events to the end proposed—the final objects in the events themselves.

In general this "working together for good" includes all that happens to good men in this world, every station and condition in which they are placed, every circumstance in their lot, from the beginning to the end of their lives. Nothing befalls them fortuitously; nothing happens in vain, or without a meaning; but every event possesses its proper and destined place, and forms a link in that great chain of causes which is appointed to carry on their improvement and felicity (the end proposed). As all the rivers upon the face of the globe, however circuitous they may be in their progress and however opposite in their course, yet meet at last in the ocean, so all the seemingly discordant events in the life of a good man are made to preserve, upon the whole, an unerring tendency to his good, and to concur and conspire for promoting it at the last. What a noble and sublime view does this present of the supreme dominion of Providence, and of its care exercised over every righteous man!

To this end all prosperous circumstances, and, more to our purpose, all the evils of this life, were particularly designed to be subservient. It is certain that from the discipline of adversity the most salutary improvements of human nature have been often derived. In that severe school the predominant errors of the mind have been corrected: "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." The man of God has by these means been trained up to fortitude of mind, improved in humanity to man, and formed to the habits of devotion and resignation to God. Nay, their very infirmities, their failings and errors, are made, by the powerful influence of God's grace, to contribute ultimately to their good. They are thereby instructed in the knowledge of themselves; and they are properly humbled by the discovery of their own weakness.

It is not merely said that all things prove good in their issue, but that they "*work*" for it. This imports that "all things" are so formed by God as to become active causes of happiness to those who love him. His infinite wisdom gives to things most unapt an aptitude and fitness to fulfil his own great ends, and makes dangers and evils his instruments for accomplishing the felicity of his servants. There is a certain operation and process always going on, by which, though we are insensible of it, all things are constantly advancing towards the end in view. In the same manner as the operation of natural causes, though slow and unperceived, is sure; as the seed which is sown in the ground is every moment unfolding itself, and, though no eye can trace its

progress, yet with a silent growth is preparing for the stalk and full ear, so, in the moral world, throughout all the dispensations of Providence, there is the same latent but certain progress of the seeds of virtue and holiness, tending towards perfection in the end. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

It is said in the text, not only that all things thus work, but they "*work together,*" for good, intimating that they are made to conspire and to concur one with another for bringing about what is best on the whole. Taken singly and individually, it might be difficult to conceive how each event wrought for good. They must be viewed in their consequences and effects, considered in their dependences and connexions, as links hanging together to form one extensive chain. It is by adjusting into one consistent whole the various events that fill up human life, arranging in the happiest succession all the occurrences of that complicated scene, and bending to his purpose things which appear opposite and contrary, that the Almighty accomplishes his great plan in behalf of "those who love him, and are the called according to his purpose."

The end proposed could not be better exemplified than in the above instance, viz. the end which Infinite Wisdom has in the afflictions and sufferings of the godly; and I hazard the opinion that Dr. Blair, who evidently paid his court to the Topics, did derive the hint for the composition of his discourse from that now before us.

Before quitting this Topic, allow me to remind you that in all your discourses there should be some end proposed, to which the whole of your remarks should bend; particularly should this be the case in reference to such sermons as originate in particular occasions. Thus, Mr. Robinson says: "Ordination sermons very properly turn on the *design* of God in establishing a standing gospel ministry, on the aims of bad and of good men in entering on the office, and so on. Funeral sermons are frequently composed on this plan; the design of God in afflictive providences, design of ministers in eulogizing the deceased, &c. Fast sermons, thanksgiving and commemorative sermons, are also with great propriety composed on such special views." In what are called charity sermons, in education sermons, or sermons recommendatory of schools for the instruction of the poor, and in missionary sermons, the end in view must be strictly preserved; for their utility greatly depends upon it. It is foolish to say every thing but what a man engages to say. Supposing the institution to be so good as to merit the engagement, it will surely furnish matter sufficient without the introduction of topics foreign from the immediate design. These sermons should all be contrived so that the main subject of the text leads almost necessarily, without any thing like forced or far-fetched inference, to a conclusion favourable to the institution whose interests you are called on to advocate.

Again: some of our highly valued institutions are assisted by public meetings, for which a string of resolutions are to be spoken to instead of texts. Great good has been done in this way, both in reference to the assistance afforded to the funds of such societies, and also in regard to the salutary impressions produced on the minds of many who have attended their meetings. As it is not improbable that you will be called upon to speak upon some of these occasions, I am anxious that you should be able to acquit yourselves creditably; and in a short space I cannot do better than to say that, in order to this, you must avoid the faults and copy the excellences of the examples before you. You will observe that a preaching speech neither answers the ends of the committee nor pleases the people. The end in view requires good sense, Christian feeling, a lively imagination, a readiness to avail yourselves of any topic that occurs, either in the report or the opening speech, in an extemporaneous and free manner; for written

speeches, delivered *memoriter*, seldom succeed well. Persons who habituate themselves to speak on the observational system * generally make the best platform speakers. But the mere textuary is quite out of his element on the platform, and if he proceed at all he must *preach*. Occasional practice also in proposition will be useful here, because sometimes a point requires to be proved. However, some principle ideas may be secured beforehand ; and these should be so judiciously incorporated with the current topics of the meeting that what you may have previously concocted in your own mind may appear as naturally arising from the circumstances of the case as if it had not been matter of study at all. The late Mr. Canning was very expert at this. Anticipating pretty nearly what would be said in the house, he prepared a great deal of subject, and then threw in his speech, so modified by the course of the discussion as to appear a perfectly off-hand affair. This is absolutely necessary if you desire that your speech should be well received.

You never, or very rarely, hear a sensible speaker allude to himself. Egotism is abominable : speak handsomely of every body else, as far as truth will allow, and leave others to speak of you. Anecdotes are quite fashionable ; they often tell well, and that makes them fashionable. A just taste will direct you whether it will be best to fly your anecdote or keep it in the cage. Keep it in the cage by all means if you are a party in it, or say, as Paul said, "I know such a man," &c. I have heard a speaker entertain a meeting more than half an hour with a history of his benevolent visits to Newgate, to Bridewell, into cellars, garrets, &c. ; and he took care to throw into his speech all the good things he said, and the vast convincing and converting power that his words had upon the poor creatures, and the subscriptions he raised for their relief, and concluded by intimating that he felt quite ready to go again upon exploits of the same kind, being most devoutly disposed to do all the good he could in his *humble* way. The speech is done ; he waits to be clapped, sits down without it dreadfully mortified, and vows he will never attend such a meeting again. Now this is fulsome stuff ; one is disgusted to hear a man thus blowing his own trumpet.

It is an old observation, "Whenever you hear a person speak of himself, open both your ears ;" for he will lay open his little self in a most diverting manner, and if he does not edify he will amuse you. But let the end proposed in calling the meeting be always uppermost in your thoughts, and you will not be in danger of offending by any intimation of your own consequence ; and if you should not be so happy as to make the most eloquent speech, yet certainly yours may be the most closely appropriate of any. This is, in fact, the best praise.

LECTURE XX.

TOPIC XV.

CONSIDER WHETHER THERE BE ANY THING REMARKABLE IN
THE MANNER OF A SPEECH OR ACTION.

ALTHOUGH the manner in which any sentiment is expressed or any action performed may be considered as circumstantial only, and our first care should be directed to the doctrine or practice to which any passage of scripture may lead ; yet, the propriety of noticing whatever is remarkable in the

* See Lecture VII.

style of expression, &c., found in scripture, must be obvious to all who reflect on the subject. Frequently indeed the whole force of a text of scripture is lost by overlooking some emphatic word.

In order to discover the additional force which peculiarities of expression convey, little more is required than careful attention, though some knowledge of the original languages will afford valuable assistance, and it is highly desirable that every preacher should learn at least so much of the elements of Hebrew and Greek as may enable him to profit by consulting the lexicons. Bagster's Comprehensive Bible is also a most excellent help for this purpose, far superior to any thing of the kind ever edited before; it forms the best pulpit Bible in Europe, and considering its value we ought not to complain of the price; I think every congregation ought to furnish it.

The manner of expression in every language is called its idiom, its cast, its phraseology. In scripture these peculiarities (chiefly Hebraisms) are very numerous.* Sometimes the energy of a sentence lies in a single word, and that a monosyllable. Such words have been called *syncategorematica*, a term which rivals the famous name *chrononountonthologos*. Our *syncategorematica* signifies that a certain word, which is of small or of no unusual value in itself, is yet made of very great account in company with other words, when suitably marshalled among them. But I think, with submission, that these words might better be called *pointers*, in allusion to the two stars in the Ursa Major which point to the north star; for in like manner these words point to the sense, and we mark them as pointers by a strong emphasis, as "God *so* loved the world" (John iii. 16); for here, whether we consider the subject of the text (God's love), or the gift (his only Son), we are equally at a loss for an expression of admiration: one is "infinite;" the other is "unspeakable." The apostle John, therefore, feeling the inexpressible sublimity of his subject, would not attempt to unveil it; yet by one short word—*so*, and giving that a place so well adapted to receive it, he conveys to the mind more than any circumlocution or amplification ever could have conveyed. It is in cases like these that the judicious preacher, while he does justice to his text, enlarges the conceptions of his audience, and elevates himself in the estimation of the wise.

The meaning of even single words is not however always convertible from one language to another, without some diminution of force or energy; but in some cases the translation may be more expressive than the original, as in Job. iv. 9: "By the *blast* of God they perish." Here the Hebrew receives an accession of strength in our English word *blast*. The original means no more than to breathe out of the nostrils with anger, but in English it is the concentration of every terrible idea; it is the terror of terrors, directed by an unerring hand, to execute vengeance divine in a moment on provoking rebels. Addison in Cato adopts this word with effect:

"Is there not some chosen curse,
Some hidden thunder in the store of heaven,
Red with uncommon wrath, to *blast* the man
Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin?"

The above is not a solitary instance of the original being somewhat indebted to an English translation. Endless duration is both in Hebrew and Greek but very imperfectly expressed: in short they have no single term to

* See Lecture I. p. 3—5.

convey the idea of our English word *everlasting*; this meets the full exigency of the case; it conveys the solemn and sublime idea as far as language can carry it. The name of the Supreme Being, *Almighty*, expresses in an admirable manner the two words in Hebrew אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי. As instances in which our translation of the New Testament favours a strong expression we may refer to 1 Thess. v. 23: "The *very* God of peace," &c. John vii. 26: "Do the rulers *know indeed* that this is the *very* Christ." In general however these emphatic words, these pointers, are by far the strongest in the original, though not without strength when translated into the English language; for instance, 1 Chron. iv. 10: "Oh that thou wouldst bless me *indeed*." "It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessings, Jabez reckoned there was somewhat more peculiar, which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in this expression; what we read 'bless me indeed' is 'bless me in blessing me;' as if he had said, Let me have a blessing within a blessing: let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a cortex, the outside; let me have that blessing which is wrapped up and enclosed in the external blessing." The expression is something akin to that of the apostle, "grace for grace."*

So likewise Acts v. 20: "All the words of *this life*." "By 'this life' is meant a peculiar sort of life. *This life* τῆς ζωνς ταύτης. *This same life* that was so highly predicated and cried up at that time, so that no one could be in doubt what kind of life it was. It is true when we use the phrase 'of this life,' we ordinarily refer to the common affairs of this present temporary life; but that it cannot be so understood here is evident: the whole business under consideration had quite another reference. The apostles had no controversy with the rulers of the Jews about the affairs of this world, or of the best way of living a few days on earth, but what was the surest way of living for ever, and whether believing in Christ as the Messiah, he that was to come, was not that way. Christ's complaint was that they would not come to him that they might have this life; so here the angel of the Lord commanded the apostles to preach the words of this life, using the demonstrative term ταύτης—*this same life*, now so much disputed, and which began to make so great a noise in the world, cried up by some, decried by others: this sufficiently distinguished it. There were some obscure notices of it before; but now it was more clearly revealed and more loudly to be spoken out. The manner of expression signifies it to be a peculiar and more excellent kind of life, very distinct from and far transcending what is common to men, nor does it leave us in any doubt of the angel's meaning. Now the 'words of this life' must necessarily mean the gospel, viz., of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which Christ's servants are bound to diffuse in the *words* of it. Hence it follows that we have things here in specialty; first, that the gospel is composed or made up of words of a peculiar, most excellent, and noble kind of life; and, secondly, that such words are to be revered, preserved, preached pure and without alloy."†

We see by these instances how much is to be learnt by paying strict attention to the manner of an expression, and that to pass by this is to make slovenly work of preaching. The proper course as to these passages seems

[* The student should not rely on the author's correctness in these remarks—which space does not allow us to correct, but examine for himself.]

† J. Howe.

to be to state the beauty or force of the word or words, or their *peculiarity*, and then to comment upon them with truth and accuracy, as in the foregoing quotations. Some criticisms may be dry and uninteresting, but such as these never can be so.

It may here be remarked that scripture follows no settled manner in expression. Sometimes, instead of a concise usage, it adopts a modified manner, as in Gen. vi. 5: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Still, in general, scripture beauties consist in brevities, *multum in parvo*, like the diamond that by diminutive brilliancy attracts and secures to itself the honour of pre-eminence. It will be our present business to search for these valuables, and bring them to light, or rather bring again to light what others have discovered, and perhaps the best way will be to consider them by the part of speech to which they respectively belong.

The Greek articles are very superior to those of the English, as Matt. xxvi. 28. Our Lord, at the institution of the commemorative Supper, took the cup, and having given it to his disciples, said: "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Almost every syllable of the Greek, but especially the article, is singularly emphatic: *Τουτο γαρ εστι ΤΟ αιμα μου, ΤΟ τῆς καλῆς διαθηκῆς, ΤΟ περι πολλων εκχυνομενον εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων*. The following literal translation and paraphrase are suitable to the original: "*For this is THAT blood of mine which was pointed out by all the sacrifices under the Jewish law, and particularly by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, THAT blood of the sacrifice slain for the ratification of the new covenant, THE blood ready to be poured out for the multitudes, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, for the taking away of sin—sin, whether original or actual, in all its power and guilt, in all its energy and pollution.*"*

Here we obtain a clear and distinct view of the sacrifice of Christ which we so often commemorate (though I think not often enough), which reflection, abstraction, or meditation but faintly represents. The law is the mirror, the medium of knowledge; this help must not be despised nor neglected. You, as preachers, must study the law; you must be lawyers, or you cannot be gossellers in the complete sense intended.

In the foregoing translation, the three words in capitals are the pointers without which we cannot well discern the sense. This is a very choice excellence of the Greek language, which without very great care we almost lose.

Another instance we have in St. Peter's famous confession, Matt. xvi. 16: *Συ ει ο Χριστος, ο υιος ΤΟΥ Θεου ΤΟΥ ζωντος*. "Thou art *the* Christ, *the* Son of *the* living God." In this passage, as in the last instance, every word is highly emphatic, agreeably to a rule in the Greek language. The apostle Peter did not say merely, thou art Christ, Son of God, without the article, but thou art the Christ, the Messiah, *the* Son, that very Son, thus positively asserting his belief of that fundamental article of the Christian religion, the divinity and office of the Redeemer of the world. Again: to follow the passage through every beauty—"Of *the* living God, or of God *the* living one." There is also something as to emphasis to be observed in our Lord's reply to Peter: *Συ ει Πετρος*. "I say unto thee, Thou art Peter," importing that the name was more a title than a proper name.

* Prebendary Horne, vol. ii.

This was more particularly the case in former times ; for, when a person's name was changed, the new name was always significant ; and for the most part, when a name was given by divine authority, it was predictive of some peculiarity in the character, the life, the achievements, or the destiny of the person on whom it was conferred. When Simon the son of Jona first became a follower of Christ, our Lord gave him the name of Cephas, or the *rock*, which passed into the equivalent word in the Greek, *Πετρος*. Our Lord, upon this occasion of the confession of his faith, says to him, "Thou art *Peter*." The like form of words—though the similarity appears not in our English bibles—was used by the patriarch Jacob, as the exordium of the blessing which he pronounced upon the most distinguished of his sons : "Thou art *Judah* : thy brethren shall praise thee ;" that is, "Thou hast been rightly named Judah ; the name properly belongs to thee, because thou wilt be what the name imports, the object of thy brethren's praise." So here : "Thou art *Peter* ;" that is, "Thou hast been properly named so ; for it now appears that thou hast about thee what the name imports."

But, to proceed a little further in these edifying criticisms, turn to John i. 21 : *Ὁ προφητης εἰ συ* ;—"Art thou *that* prophet" whom the Jewish nation have so long and so anxiously expected, and who was promised by Moses ? Deut. xviii. 15—18. Revert also to John x. 11 : *Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός*—"I am *that* good shepherd," or "*the* shepherd *that* good one," of whom Isaiah (xl. 11) and Ezekiel (xxxiv. 23) respectively prophesied.*

See John i. 14 : "The Word was made flesh, and *dwelt* among us"—*ἐσκηνοῦσεν ἐν ἡμῖν* literally, *tabernacled* among us. The word *σκηνοῶ* signifies to erect a booth, tabernacle, or temporary residence, and not a permanent dwelling ; it was therefore fitly applied to the humanity of Christ, which, like the ancient tabernacle, was to be only a temporary residence of the eternal Divinity on earth. There is also a strong emphasis in our Lord's sentence or judgment, Matt. xxii. 21 : "Render unto God the things that are God's ;" the Greek article is twice repeated, *Τα τοῦ Θεοῦ*. There is a still more remarkable emphasis in Heb. xiii. 5 : *Οὐ μὴ σε ἀνοῶ οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σε εγκαταλίπω* which Dr. Guise says is equal to "I will not leave thee, no, no, I will not forsake thee."

Verbs in the imperative mode are very expressive, as "*Come* now, let us reason together"—"*Come* unto me all you that labour," &c. ; this you can sufficiently observe in Cruden's Concordance on the word *come*.

Sometimes adverbs carry great emphasis as to some notion of time. "*Then* those that feared the Lord spoke often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. The word *then* is here peculiarly emphatic, for it was a time of great degeneracy. At this season of open wickedness there were a few truly pious Jews, "who spoke often one to another." We may also notice this passage, Rom. viii. 1 : "There is therefore *now* no condemnation."

The pronoun is often very emphatic, as Phil. i. 29 : "For to *you* it is given on behalf of Christ," &c. ; and 2 Sam. xii. 7 : "*Thou* art the man."

I may here add Claude's illustration of this Topic. His text is Rom. viii. 37 : "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." "You may remark," he observes, "that there is a more than ordinary force in these words, *more than conquerors*, as they express

* Horne.

an heroical triumph. The apostle does not simply say, 'We bear our trials with patience;' he not only says, 'We shall conquer in this conflict;' but he affirms, 'We are more than conquerors.' It is much that faith resists trials without being oppressed; it is more to conquer these trials after a rude combat; but to affirm that the believer shall be *more than a conqueror* is as much as to say, 'He shall conquer without a combat, and triumph without resistance;' it is as much as to say, 'He shall make trials the matter of his joy and glory (as the apostle says, "We glory in tribulation"), considering them not as afflictions and sorrows, but as divine honours and favours.' This was also the apostle's mind when he wrote to the Philippians, 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' He considers sufferings as gifts of the liberality of God, for which the faithful are obliged to be thankful.

"So in this other passage, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' You may here remark the heroism and magnanimity of St. Paul. His faith seems to defy all the powers of nature. He assembles them all—*life, death, angels, &c.*, to triumph over them, and to exult in their defeat. This language marks a full persuasion of the favour of God and an invincible confidence in his love.

"Such remarks as these may be made upon many expressions of Jesus Christ, wherein are discovered a dignity and majesty which cannot belong to any mere creature, as when he says, 'Before Abraham was I am'—'Whilst I am in the world I am the light of the world,'—'All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them'—'You believe in God, believe also in me'—'Whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do;' and many other passages of the same kind."

The above examples will, I think, be sufficient to show that the manner of an expression, &c., deserves your regard. This science is worthy the name that is given to it, *philology—the love of words*, and cannot fail to assist the diligent student to bring out of the divine treasury things new and old. I have already said that it is not very difficult; it requires nothing but an accurate inspection of words and their design. An intimate acquaintance with your own language is, however, of vast importance, and to acquire it you must submit to the drudgery of carefully studying a good dictionary. Perry's Synonymous Dictionary is excellent to direct to the choice of words, and Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary for pronunciation.* Some preachers are in the habit of using words the true meaning of which they do not understand, and not unfrequently expose themselves by a barbarous pronunciation, which is a great reproach to a public speaker.

I know it is not your duty to be always pondering upon words; generally speaking you must fix upon the subject of your text, its general character and design, and must discuss ably and comprehensively; but whenever there is an evident emphasis upon any word, however small the word may be, it ought not to be overlooked or neglected.

[* Smart's edition of Walker is perhaps the best pronouncing dictionary, but no book can do more than approximate to correctness. The speaker who aims at this can only attain it by intercourse with refined and cultivated society.]

Allow me to recommend that, when you read the scriptures for your private edification, you mark these extraordinary words by drawing a line under them with a pen, and I feel persuaded that your edification will reward your sedulous attention; while, on the other hand, a hurrying perusal is like travelling post, a number of beauties scattered by the way must be passed unnoticed.

Having thus recommended the Topic to your attention, I may be permitted to add that, in endeavouring to give their full effect, their full strength and fair proportions, to the peculiarities on which we are treating, we must be careful not to dwell so long upon single words as to become trifling or tedious, as that would defeat the very design and intention altogether. Some hints to this end we shall gather from the perusal of the sermons of Walker, Davies, Simeon, &c. They thought this an important point, and they have left us the benefit of their plans. A few specimens shall now be laid before you.

Mr. Simeon on Deut. xxvii. 26: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law," &c., notices the great emphasis of the word *Amen*, which we are so frequently taking into our lips. He remarks that the term imports,

- I. An assent to the truth.
- II. A confession of its reasonableness.
- III. An acknowledgment of its excellency.
- IV. An approbation of it with regard to our own particular case.

Mr. Davies (vol. i. p. 88), on Isa. lxvi. 2: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor," &c. In this passage the emphasis lies upon the pronoun *this*, distinguishing the objects of divine regard and rejecting the self-righteous character that claims a look from heaven. Our author preserves the emphasis by making his divisions and discussions to turn on the descriptions given in the text of the man to whom the Majesty of Heaven condescends to look with favour.

- I. It is the *poor man* whom he thus regards.
- II. His *contrition* is noticed.
- III. He is one who *trembles* at God's word.

By referring to a former Lecture you will see the emphasis and divisions run upon the word *show*: "Who will *show* us any good?" Ps. iv. 6.

Mr. Walker, on Hos. xiv. 8: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?"—takes notice of the emphatic word *shall*. He observes,

There is something very remarkable in this expression. Ephraim had joined himself to idols; God once seemed to let him alone; but now divine compassion decides otherwise: "Ephraim *shall* say," &c. These words suggest the following observations:

- I. That a sinner in his natural state is joined to idols.
- II. That to separate a sinner from his idols is the work of God alone.
- III. That this separation is effected by discoveries of grace.
- IV. That every person thus separated will readily speak out the words of the text, and cry, in response to the Lord's *shall*, I *will* renounce idols.

Walker, on Gal. vi. 4: "Let every one prove his own work." His divisions are—

- I. Explain the import of the exhortation.
- II. Give some directions with regard to the manner of conducting the enquiry.

Under the former head he remarks "There is a particular emphasis in these words, which must not be overlooked. It is his *own* work that a

man must prove. We are all ready enough to examine the works of others, and to pass sentence upon them. We are often abroad, but seldom at home, where our chief business lies. Like some travellers, who are well acquainted with foreign countries, but shamefully ignorant of their own, we know more of others than we are willing to know of ourselves, and persuade ourselves that the study of our own hearts is a dull and melancholy business, which may incite within us many uneasy thoughts and can give us no pleasure."

The foregoing examples turn chiefly on single words ; but the Topic will also lead us to notice phrases or sentences in which the style or manner of expression may be in any respect remarkable. The following is an example in which the Topic is thus employed as the basis of division :

Walker, on James iv. 13—15 : "Go to now, you that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city," &c. He considers,

I. The form of expression condemned.

II. The amendment suggested.

These examples will, I imagine, be sufficient to direct any student. Emphatic words or phrases are in some cases to affect the division of a discourse, while in others a transient notice will be sufficient. A sound judgment is of continual utility ; and this, like every other faculty, will be strengthened and improved by exercise and experience.

I have no further remarks to offer on this Topic, so far as regards the assistance which it is calculated to furnish in sermonizing, but I shall avail myself of this opportunity to recommend an attention to *manner* in reference to the delivery of your discourses, and to offer a few hints for the assistance of those who may not have an opportunity to consult more elaborate treatises on this subject. Such, in my view, is the importance attaching to the manner in which any thing is done that it may be called a distinct study, and one that is well worthy the student's attention. When we consider what a commanding influence the mere manner of a thing obtains among men—how much the best actions may suffer from the manner in which they are performed, and how often the manner will carry a point with very slender means—must we not admit that it ought to receive our best attention in every thing we execute, in every thing we say, and in every thing in which our fellow-men are to be our observers and critics ? The manner in which an army is arranged and a battle fought is commonly of great consequence, and often contributes more to the victory than valour or numerical strength. Often has the manner of an orator been found so to strike the eye and the ear that thunders of applause have followed a well-delivered sentence, a just emphasis, or a graceful cadence, though the sentence itself would have passed unnoticed but for such an appendage. We have several popular preachers who owe almost every thing to their manner ; and many others who ought to be popular, and certainly would be so, if an attention to manner occupied one tenth of the time and pains employed on their compositions. "When we address ourselves to others by words," observes Dr. Blair, "our intention certainly is to make some impression on those to whom we speak ; it is to convey to them our own ideas and emotions. Now the tone of our voice, our looks and gestures, interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do ; nay, the impression they make on others is frequently much stronger than any that words can make. We often see that

an expressive look, or a passionate cry, unaccompanied by words, conveys to others more forcible ideas, and rouses within them stronger passions, than can be communicated by the most eloquent discourse. The signification of our sentiments made by tone and gestures has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all ; whereas words are arbitrary, conventional symbols of our ideas, and by consequence must make a more feeble impression. So true is this that, to render words fully significant, they must in almost every case receive some aid from the manner of pronunciation and delivery ; and he who, in speaking, should employ bare words, without enforcing them by proper tones and accents, would leave us with a faint and indistinct impression, often with a doubtful and ambiguous conception, of what he had delivered. Nay, so close is the connexion between certain sentiments and the proper manner of pronouncing them, that he who does not pronounce them after that manner can never persuade us that he believes or feels the sentiments themselves.”*

“Pleads he in earnest ? Look upon his face :
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are jest :
His words come from his mouth, ours from our breast :
He prays but faintly, and would be denied ;
We pray with heart and soul.”

The following is a translation (the first I believe, in print) of Borromeo's directions on this subject, which are well worthy of the student's attention :—

“Let him not aim at a laboured kind of eloquence. Let him avoid all dissimulation. Let him not, in the act of speaking, follow the manner of the ignorant multitude ; and let him avoid obsolete and foreign words. He will by all means avoid such terms as those of *fate*, *fortune*, *mischance*, and others of that kind. Let him not affect a too frequent use of epithets, nor a poetical kind of speaking. Let him not make use of the proverbs of old women ; and let him avoid a repetition of the same matter. When he speaks of faults which offend against chastity, let him use caution, lest he imprudently fall into obscene discourse. Let him take care that in speaking he do not throw out scandalous insinuations. Let him by all means avoid flattery, and beware of an ostentatious manner of speaking. Let him not speak ambiguously, nor too concisely or obscurely, that his hearers may not be in doubt. A preacher will endeavour to moderate his voice and action so as to seem to speak, not according to art, but sincerely, and according to nature. Let him not strike the pulpit with his hands except when the importance of the subject requires it. Let him not fly, as it were, across the pulpit, leaping first from this corner and then from that. Let him stand upright in the pulpit. Let him not wrinkle his nose, lick his lips, fix his chin on his chest, nor throw out his arms like a gladiator. Let him neither cough nor spit frequently, unless necessity compel him. Nor let him, whilst speaking, discharge the greater part of his breath through his nose.”

To this plain but judicious counsel I beg leave here to add the following hints, as preliminary to the direct study of manner :—

1. Study to discover and correct your very worst fault before you attempt any thing else ; then endeavour to correct the next worst, and so on, till your whole manner is changed. If any difficulty occur in this discovery,

* Blair, Lect. xxxviii.

make use of your friends and even your enemies ; at any rate make the discovery.

"If you in true intent your faults would know,
Make use of every friend and every foe."

This advice I apply particularly to any natural or acquired bad habit in speaking.

2. Get a correct notion of what is neat and graceful. To this end study nature ; see how nature expresses herself where passions or feelings are unrestrained. Also as far as you have opportunity take the benefit of the best living examples—the best public preachers, the best pleaders, the most eloquent of our senators ; whatever is excellent in these has its foundation in nature.*

3. Before manner can be of any use the matter of your discourse must be well studied and arranged, and you must be able to express your thoughts in correct and suitable language, otherwise there would be nothing worthy of a graceful manner. A discourse well arranged and elegantly worded may be thought to require no aid from manner ; but this is certainly a mistake, since the more excellent the matter and arrangement of a discourse the more capable it is of receiving every embellishment that a graceful manner can add to it : and in this view there is no occasion to institute the enquiry, "Whether matter or manner conduce most to the effect of a sermon."

I am perfectly aware that the remarks offered in this Lecture are but little wanted by many of my readers. Some have a countenance so naturally expressive, or possess such strong religious feelings, that they cannot speak otherwise than impressively ; many also have acquired such a just manner of pronunciation from good tutors as to require no assistance from these pages ; some have a naturally graceful manner ; some so fine an ear to propriety, and a perception so correct, that in practice they are little behind the more highly educated ; while others are furnished with works which treat fully on the subjects which can here be but briefly touched upon. All these classes are quite out of my present view, my design being to furnish some assistance to the least educated and to those who have the fewest advantages.

One of the first objects of attention, in reference to manner, is the proper management of the voice. It is plain that we should so speak as that we may be well heard : the ancient wizards muttered as though they distrusted their own words, Isa. viii. 19. It is equally plain that we should speak agreeably, so as to move the audience we address. By the former we raise or convey ideas, and by the latter we excite emotions. The quantity of voice must be sufficient for the whole space occupied : and, when a voice is naturally weak, it may be brought to a sufficient strength by degrees, as I perfectly know by experience. But, besides mere volume of voice, the sound, in whatever degree it is made, will receive very great advantage from a distinct manner of speaking. "Distinctness of articulation contributes more, perhaps, to being well heard and clearly understood than mere loudness of sound. The quantity of sound necessary to fill even a large space is smaller than is commonly imagined ; and, with a distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it reach further than the strongest voice can

[* Nothing is so valuable as a good teacher. Every institution for the training of ministers of Christ should be provided with this essential agency. Mere mouthing elocutionists are an abomination, as they promote a forced and false method of delivery.]

reach without it. To this, therefore, every public speaker ought to pay great attention. He must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and let every syllable, and even every letter in the word which he pronounces, be heard distinctly, without slurring, whispering, or suppressing any of the proper sounds.* I add, speak neither too slowly, nor too rapidly.

Manner has also some respect to *accentuation*, and on this I must be excused if I lead you back to your former studies. "Accent," says Murray, "is the laying of a peculiar stress of the voice on a certain letter or syllable in a word, that it may be better heard than the rest, or distinguished from them; as in the word *presume*, the stress of the voice must be upon the letter *u*, and hence the second syllable takes the accent."

Next to this whole sentences require attention, and every sentence has one or more emphatic word or words in it. Emphasis (from *εμφαίνω* to express strongly) either establishes the true sense of a sentence or ruins and perverts it. Take for an example the words of our Saviour, John vi. 67: "Will you also go away?" Here the emphasis is certainly required upon the word *you*. "The crowd is gone, the crowd is offended, and will *you* go after them." The reply of Peter, in the name of his fellow-disciples, proves this point. Now, although I have fixed upon the emphasis, yet there is very strong meaning in the sentence on whichever word the emphasis is placed. Upon the word *you* it is very strong: "*you*, my disciples, whom I have taken under my wing, whom I have taught and instructed; consider the profession you have made, the obligations you lie under, the expectations you have from me." If we place the emphasis on *also*, then it refers to those who have departed; if on the words *go away*, fresh matter immediately appears: "Will you leave your Master? Are you willing to relinquish all claim to my care, love, tenderness, protection, and salvation? What wrong have you found in me? have I ever disappointed your just and reasonable hopes? have I ever been a barren wilderness to you? Can you find a better master? Will your adversary the devil, will the world, or sin, promise and perform what I make over to you in the New Testament? What can earth, what can heaven itself do for you? If you draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in you, and can you bear my departure from you?"

There is also, as you recollect, in most grammars, this example of emphasis: "Do you ride to town to-day?" Now, if you read these words without the least emphasis, the question will be very equivocal. If you place the emphasis on the second word *you*, the answer might be: "No, I shall send my man." If you place it on the next word *ride*, then the answer might be: "No, I shall walk." If you place it upon the succeeding word *town*, the answer might be: "No, I shall take my ride in the country." If, lastly, you place it on *to-day*, then the answer might be: "No, I shall defer my ride till to-morrow."

Blair points out the several shades of difference in the point and meaning that may attach to the appeal which Christ made to Judas, according as the emphasis is placed: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Marking the word *betrayest* makes the reproach turn on the infamy of treachery. *Betrayest thou?* makes it rest upon Judas's connexion with his Master. *Betrayest thou the Son of Man?* rests it on Christ's character as

* Blair, Lecture xxxiii.

the Redeemer. Place the emphasis on the word *kiss*, and it turns upon prostituting the signal of peace to the purpose of destruction. Now I submit that the emphasis ought to lie on *thou*, which marks Judas's connection with his Master, because it agrees with the prophetic language of the Psalms, Ps. xli. 9 : "Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me;" and it is particularly noticed in the gospel that he was "one of the twelve." Besides, that any other than one of Christ's friends should be treacherous and deceitful is no marvel at all.

Again : take this passage, Acts xvii. 28 : We are also his offspring." If the emphasis be placed upon the word *we*, it points out who were the persons so called the offspring of God : if placed on the word *are*, it positively asserts the truth of the expression : if it be placed on *also*, it implies that we are not the only persons that are God's offspring, but we express our claim as well as others : if it be placed on *his*, it points us to our Creator : and, if on the word *offspring*, we are led from plain to figurative language, and by a beautiful trope, derived from a tree, to consider our relation to and dependence upon God for every blessing, as the branches depend upon the root. In some cases the emphasis is plain, as in interrogatives : Who said so? Why weepest thou? Here it is evidently on the first word : all interrogatives, however, do not throw the emphasis on the first, for it is sometimes reserved for the last word ; the sense must direct.

When words are put in opposition the emphatic words are obvious ; as, It is better to be *loved* than *feared*. Nobody can err as to "Thou art the man !" but in other cases it is confessed there is difficulty. The speaker must consider the scope and design, because here he has to learn the mind of another ; but there is no difficulty when he utters any thing fresh from his own heart, and this is one thing that makes natural eloquence so attractive. Many of the ministers of the establishment excel in public reading, because they are unusually accurate in emphasizing ; and they make this a study : some young clergymen have their Common Prayer-book with all the emphatic words underlined by a skilful hand.*

There is, however, one remark I may make : it is better to emphasize too little than too much. Extravagance is always disgusting, and an attempt to make almost every other word emphatic is quite contrary to a just manner.

Notice must also be taken of the *rest* or *pause* ; that is, we are sometimes to suspend discourse. Race-horses must not stop till they pass the post, but not so the preacher or reader ; he is allowed to take breath freely at suitable places of his discourse. One such place in preaching is at the close of a division or sub-division. Here the people are relieved, and have a profitable moment of reflection : yet, for evident reasons, these pauses must not be too long. But, besides the pauses at the close of a division or paragraph, there is the rest of eloquence—the rest that speaks when the preacher suspends his voice, while the countenance still maintains the subject or the living thought. Some pauses in reading are necessary even to convey the sense, as, for instance, Matt. xi. 7 : "What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" If these words be read as question and answer

* [And sad work they make of it. Hardly any speaking or reading is so ludicrously bad as that which is employed in the pulpit, carelessness or affectation being commonly at home there. There is no apology for such a state of things.]

(which according to the preceding context is evidently opposite to our Lord's meaning), it is as much as though our Redeemer meant to say that John was unworthy of attention, that he was a fickle, unstable, inconsistent preacher, carried about with every wind of doctrine. Whereas, if we consider the passage as two questions (as it really is), the sense clearly appears to be a strong assertion to the contrary, that John was a person of quite a different character, and that he stood firm and immovable as an "iron pillar" or a brazen wall, that the doctrines he preached were not yea and nay, but yea and amen.* Therefore, to mark the above passage properly, a pause must be used after the first question, to give silent eloquence to the passage, and the same after the second question; then our Lord's meaning appears to advantage.

May I here interpose a caution that is rather irrelevant, but which now occurs to me? Take care to ascertain at what place to pause or leave off your discourse, as the people are often prepared for it before it comes.

Thus I have made a few remarks on accentuation, on emphasis, on the rest or pause, each of which is important, and deserves your attention in its place; but there is likewise a general skill necessary over all the words of a sentence, which we may call the mode or manner. The fault which it is intended now to correct is called monotony, from *μονος*—*single*, and *τονος*—*a tone*: uniformity of sound, want of variety in cadence. The excellence we would therefore notice, and which we now recommend, is to give tone in variety. To give an illustration: Suppose one person were to repeat the progression of numbers from one to eight, and to say, in one manner and tone, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. This he does without any change of higher and lower in note, not even so much as the ticks of a clock. Suppose that a second person should repeat all these numbers in the sound of eight bells. Now here is a striking difference; something like it exists between a monotonous speaker and another who adds a little variety to his speaking: not that he is to sing, but he is to give to speech the due grace of variety. As I said before, Study nature; nature loves variety. As the eye and the taste delight not in sameness, neither does the ear. Perpetually harping upon the same string is wearisome, but a diversified melody is pleasing; and, if this melody harmonize with good sense, it edifies also. Yet, I repeat, to make a singing in reading or speaking is nowhere to be tolerated but in cathedral service, and even there the force of our liturgy is destroyed by it. Some words are to be delivered in a higher and some in a lower tone, and others in a kind of barytone or midway elevation, and in such a manner as that the rising and falling is regular, not by sudden jerks from one octave to another, as in music. The bold undulation of the sea waves in somewhat of a gale is no unfit comparison; or walking along a path, straight as to direction, but varied by rises and falls, conveys the same idea. This is not a wild but an intelligible variety or modulation, and is only to be acquired by studying nature, by taking the best rules and the best examples.

In this regulation of the voice you have tone, inflexion, and cadence. Tone, you know, means note or sound; and here I mean further pretty much the same thing with what is called in music the pitch or key-note. It is not positively any one certain note for all persons; but the tone or key is that to every one which is natural to him, as proceeding from the higher,

* I am indebted to Eades' View of the Gospel Ministry for part of these ideas.

the barytone, or the lower, and which is to be ascertained by a person's conversation pitch : this is the standard from which elevation or cadence is to be reckoned. This is generally the true judgment ; but when any individual has by nature or habit too much of an alto or feminine, or a low bass, both of which are disagreeable to an audience, and both of which, especially the latter, are found by experience incapable of inflexion and consequently monotonous, then I earnestly recommend an attempt to be made to overrule the prevailing key or tone, and to fix it in a more favourable station ; but let the student begin this practice in his ordinary conversation, where every thing that relates to the art of speaking should commence.

The word *inflexion* is equivalent to modulation : it is the power itself to move higher or lower, as the undulating of the waves before mentioned ; or inflexion has the command of elevation and cadence, and is the perfect contrary of the monotonous character, which is incapable of this power. By inflexion you pass from your key-note or natural tone higher or lower *pro re nata*.

The cadence is the fall of the voice below the pitch, commonly when the speaker arrives at the full period, but sometimes at the colon also. The cadence requires fine management, and every possible preparation is to be made for it that a refined taste can suggest. The noticeable preparation is at the last comma preceding the full stop, and the preparation itself is an elevation of the voice on the word just before the comma, as in the following quotation : "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

In this sentence it may be also observed that, the form of the words being imperative, the words *boast not* require an elevation of the voice above the usual key-note ; but in ordinary cases the reading of a sentence commences at the key or pitch, and in general the first variation is where the sense begins to unfold itself, and not earlier ; the words that occur before this should be in the key or pitch, without variation, that is, unless previous sentences, being somewhat impassioned, forbid that regularity ; as Acts xxvi : "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Here the first five words are introductory ; they are to be uttered in the tone or key of the voice, and, being introductory, no change whatever is advisable. After these five words, the sense opens : "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Here the elevation takes the word permitted, and is the preparation for the ensuing cadence, "to speak for thyself."

It is the perfect command of these particulars, and their just regulation, that can give strength and beauty to the sense intended to be conveyed to the mind for its edification and delight. This is one part of eloquence ; the copious flow of thought and language is the other. I hope, if any share of these excellences be possessed, that pride will be excluded ; if we speak well, it must be as though unconscious of it, like the nightingale that knows no feelings of exultation, however sweet her notes may be. You will very properly reflect that, even when you have attained considerable ability in graceful delivery, still your acquirements are far below those of others in the same line of excellence, and that to discover any thing like self-complacency would only manifest your want of common sense. Little minds are pleased with little things ; but minds imbedded in wisdom are otherwise occupied. They think little of the thing itself, but chiefly on the end to be promoted by it—the glory of God and men's good.

The foregoing observations apply chiefly to temperate speaking—to sober, rational, argumentative address—and to reading in public ; but much more is necessary for animated address, the accompaniment of feeling, or affection, or passion, which will draw with it some degree of action. And here too nature must be followed, not however nature in her vulgar forms, but nature corrected by good taste and sound sense. An ancient story has reached our times of a dumb youth, who, on a certain sudden occasion, when an assassin had lifted up his arm with a sword to slay his father, had his feelings so much excited that, with extended arms and a most bitter cry, he for the first time spoke, “Oh, save my father !” Now imagine with yourselves how the youth spoke these words, and then our meaning is exemplified as to *feelings*. The principles of divine grace, which impart an energy and a value to human language infinitely above what it would otherwise possess, neither abrogate nor forbid the operations of our feelings,* but on the contrary improve and regulate them ; and if feelings, affections, or passions have any existence in our hearts, they will naturally find the way to our lips, will pervade our countenance ; our head, our arms, will catch the fire ; and emotions as well as ideas will thus be communicated to our hearers. It seems then a necessary inference, that, if the thing felt be a matter of pure nature, then it is not a matter of art ; and the existence of that which constitutes the fact of powerful feeling is necessary before art can be summoned to our aid. The following has been ascribed to the celebrated Mr. Garrick, as conveying his sentiments on the subject. A student, it appears, had requested to know Mr. Garrick’s sentiments on public speaking ; and his reply was nearly as follows :—

“My dear pupil,

“You know how you would feel and speak in the parlour to a dear friend who was in imminent danger of his life, and with what energetic pathos of diction and countenance you would enforce the observance of that which you really thought would be for his preservation. You would not think of playing the orator, of studying your emphasis, cadence, or gesture. You would be yourself ; and the interesting nature of your subject, impressing your heart, would furnish you with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, the most engaging features, and the most suitable and graceful gestures. What you would be in the parlour, be in the pulpit ; and you will not fail to please, to affect, to profit.”

“Adieu —.”

Those feelings which are excited by evangelical considerations, and by the value and importance of our immortal spirits, will give effect to Christian eloquence, not to the extinction of cultivated skill, but rather in concurrence with it. “Paul must plant (skilfully), and Apollos must water (judiciously), and God (by special unction) gives the increase.” But let it be remembered that our time will be far more appropriately and necessarily employed in humble prayer for divine influence than in attempts to imitate those whose feelings are under its control, and assuming what we really do not feel. He who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, who loves to be sought, and to whom the cause of the gospel is precious, will not fail to answer prayer in this respect. But it is not to our present purpose to treat of divine influences ; the above hints are only thrown in by way of caution. He is a presumptuous preacher who, confiding in the assistance of art, ventures to proceed in his work without ardently imploring divine helps ; and

* See Lecture on *Comment*.

he is a vain preacher who despises the cultivation of those natural gifts and talents which God has given him for edification. I may therefore be allowed to name some of the chief feelings, affections, or passions, which the philosophy of the mind brings before us, and to show, in a few instances, what are the external tokens of those feelings where they prevail, and what degree of reliance can be placed upon them.

I begin with *admiration* or *wonder*. This feeling is excited by objects that are grand or sublime. Admiration expresses itself by both hands being moderately elevated, and the eyes elevated in the same manner and fixed upward, and gives the character of astonishment. It is unknown to stupid inanimate beings, but a preacher makes strange work of it that can stumble upon what is admirable without feeling it, or who can feel it without the appropriate expression of countenance. Who could utter such words as these with apathy: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, Lord, what is man?" &c. The works of the divine architect exhibit infinities of sparkling excellences which mock our inquiries, but which excite our admiration. Again: Solomon says, with great pathos, "But will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!" What solemn suitability do such passages afford to our devotions in connexion with due thoughts of our insignificance and pollution! In preaching the word, who can speak without admiration of the plan of redemption? the divine love, the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Who can behold Jesus controlling nature, applying remedies for all diseases, raising the dead, conferring powers and faculties on man which never before had any existence in him—who can speak of that life and immortality which Christ has brought to light, without in some degree manifesting a grateful admiration? Surely it is impossible.

Again: true religion is established upon *love*, love to God and love to man; a preacher, therefore, who is not strongly susceptible of this feeling, or who is deficient in his manner of expressing it, cannot be eloquent, however well informed may be his understanding. But the truly evangelical mind feels now, as well as holy men of old, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; the love of Christ operates as a constraining power, bearing every thing before it, and bringing the principles and feelings of the mind into subjection; the love of the Spirit exists as an indwelling principle in his heart: and the love of all persons and things, wherever the grace of God predominates, is brought into due subordination to the love of God. This love is followed by extraordinary effects in preaching the word, and really connects itself mysteriously with all gracious principles and becomes the prevailing character of the soul; it absorbs every thing else, and is what Paul calls the perfectness of the Christian character, 1 Cor. xiii. Nothing can compensate for the want of it, as St. Paul declares; and, to the work of the ministry, it is "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers of yellow gold," Ps. lxxviii. 13. The example of Paul, in his whole ministry, serves instead of all others, except indeed that of Christ himself, as to its mighty power in the work of the ministry. Well might the apostle express it as the great desire of his soul on behalf of the Thessalonians, that "the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God."

You can expect to succeed in moving the affections of your hearers only

in proportion as you manifest the spirit of love ; and, while I cannot advise you to reject any assistance that art may furnish, I am fully persuaded that something beyond the reach of art must be possessed, if we would lead our hearers to imbibe this powerful principle. To drink deeply into the Spirit of Christ will give an energy and a pathos to your whole manner, which will add a persuasive unction to all you say.

We must likewise advert to *hatred* or *abhorrence*. As one object is lovely to nature, so another may be repulsive and disgusting. Hatred is virtue or vice, a gracious feeling or a devilish one, according to the subject or person who exercises it or the objects by which it is excited. The hatred of the evil spirit is the contrast of divine love, but Christian hatred has a real existence, and is turned as by an instinctive feeling against every thing that God hates. I mean that this is the case when divine love predominates in the heart. "Do not I hate those that hate thee?" (their sins, not their persons); "I hate them with perfect hatred," Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. From the same principle the believer hates himself and the sins that made the Saviour bleed. The ugliness and deformity of sin appear so detestable that the believer "hates even the garment spotted with the flesh," as blood-stained and horrible. We are however by no means moved as deeply as we ought to be when either sin or holiness presents itself, or when we are called upon to express our sentiments respecting them. There is so much of the "flesh" in us, with all its natural bias and affection to evil, and so little of the spiritual nature, that we obtain but a glimpse of the real turpitude of sin and of the excellence of holiness ; but, if we were more perfect, the sinner, though in an angelic form, or with all the bewitcheries that nature sometimes attains, or sin in any of its abstract or most alluring forms, would appear black as hell ; and holiness, though clothed with rags, though sunk in misery, though destitute of every thing attractive to a natural being, would instantly become the object of love and veneration. Hence we see the importance of a truly spiritual mind. The moment that we quit these bodies, among our first sensations in the invisible world will be astonishment at our former errors as to the real characters of sin and holiness.

Aversion is a modification of hatred. It is this which Solomon means, Prov. iv. 14, 15 : "Enter not into the path of the wicked ; avoid it, turn from it, and pass away." To the same purpose, Eph. v. 11 : "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." This is a holy delicacy, that is disgusted at that which offends God. Now if a preacher is incapable of realizing this feeling, so as to express it in an appropriate manner, he can point no shaft at sin with effect ; no smarting comment will be delivered, no lash to make the sinner feel ; there will be no expressive countenance to indicate the mind abhorrent of evil. But, when the preacher feels as a Christian minister ought to feel, his countenance and manner will in a good degree correspond with every word that is uttered.

Holy *zeal* has perhaps as good a claim to be called a passion as any thing that bears that name. The Christian preacher makes but a melancholy figure without it. This passion, or sensation, or quality (call it what you please), throws the whole countenance open ; the eye seems to coruscate, full of ardour and impatience : in short, if you would realise its effect, imagine the apostle Paul with the family of Philip the evangelist, when the terrors of the Jewish inquisition were arrayed to restrain Paul's progress : "What

mean you to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xxi. 13. In the general tenour of his ministry, the love of Christ and zeal for his name constrained him to do, to brave, and to suffer all things for his sake and that of the church. In its more habitual or temperate forms zeal is a fervid and holy unction, which, overspreading every faculty of the preacher, directs every thing that he speaks, and finds a kindred feeling in the Christian heart.

When I reflect upon the concentrated power of all the holy passions that invest the true minister of Jesus Christ, I say, Surely here is the finger of God; endowments hallowed to the highest ends, the concentration of heavenly gifts exerted to bring sinners to repentance, proclaim the power of him from whom comes every good and perfect gift. In that devoted breast we see ready for action pity for the wretched, sorrow for human woe, and compassion and benevolence for all mankind. Personal elevation of mind is secured by faith in the promises, confidence in the cause, and the hope of a final triumph. But the wretched preacher that feels not these passions moves our commiseration, and we should as much dread falling into such an apathetic state as we should dread the palsy.*

An attention to *gesture* may to some appear to be below the dignity of the pulpit. But it is only necessary to witness the awkwardness of many preachers by no means deficient either in talent or learning in order to be convinced of its importance. The expression of the features and frame is, properly and generally speaking, the language of nature, though art often counterfeits this language, and though, moreover, some arbitrary additions have been almost universally made to it. The motions of the limbs have become to some extent artificial representations of meaning. The natural language of gesture is more comprehensive and more readily understood than that of tones. Contempt, for instance, is much more perceptible in the expression of the countenance and motion of the hand than in the mere tone of the voice. But the natural language of gesture, like that of tones, serves only to denote emotion. The expression of other ideas requires instituted signs, such as written characters, articulate sounds, or artificial gestures. Every emotion has from nature its peculiar expression of countenance, and perhaps its peculiar motions of the limbs, as well as its peculiar tone of voice; and the reality of the emotion may reasonably be suspected, whatever be the tenour of the oral language, if this be not accompanied by the proper visible manifestations of feeling. Gesture is denominated by Cicero the language of the body, and, though less comprehensive than artificial oral language, it is more expeditious and convincing. It is easy to utter a falsehood in words, it is much more difficult to counterfeit a suitable expression of countenance.

It is astonishing to what an extent gesture alone can go in representing and communicating ideas. We are told by Adair, in his History of the American Indians, that "two far distant Indian nations, who understand not a word of each other's language, will intelligibly converse together and contract engagements without any interpreters in such a surprising manner as is scarcely credible." The deaf and dumb hold intercourse between themselves and with others by a language of gestures, natural and artificial, which

* Dr. Watts on the Passions will supply the defects of this Lecture.

is wonderfully comprehensive, precise and intelligible. They have an acuteness in interpreting the slightest motion which far surpasses ours ; and hence arises the fact, which at first view often appears strange, that they can more readily converse with each other than with those possessed of the sense of hearing. Such is the power of natural signs that in institutions for the education of the deaf and dumb one year is sufficient to convey to the mind of an intelligent pupil the signification of thousands of written words. Through these natural signs, a few years since, a Chinese youth and Mr. Laurent Clerc, an assistant teacher in the Hartford Asylum, himself deaf and dumb, carried on a conversation with each other for a considerable time. The Chinese communicated in this way a great many facts relative to the place of his birth, his former occupations, the religion of his countrymen, the meaning of Chinese words, &c. ; and the result of the conversation amazed all who observed it.

It is a matter of history that Roscius, a celebrated Roman actor, and Cicero, had an amicable contest with each other which could represent the same thought in the greatest number of different ways, the former by gesture or the latter in words ; and it is stated, though we can hardly believe it, that neither party could be pronounced victorious. This contest is mentioned by Cicero himself in one of his letters. It is spoken of by Macrobius as one of habitual occurrence in the intercourse of these two distinguished Romans.*

The *art of pantomime* affords a specimen of the precision and force with which gesture is capable of communicating ideas, without the aid of oral language. This art was carried by the ancients to a much higher pitch of perfection than that at which it stands in the present day ; and, indeed, we cannot possibly imagine that such spiritless exhibitions as those of modern pantomimes should have produced the wonderful effect which the art is recorded to have had upon Greek and Roman assemblies. Its invention is ascribed to Telestes, a dancer in the employ of Æschylus, the Greek tragedian. Among the Greeks, however, it does not seem to have been practised to any great extent. They appear to have generally preferred more intellectual amusements. But the Romans, a less refined people, became so much attached to it that it ranked highest on the list of their favourite diversions, excepting perhaps the combats of wild beasts and gladiators. The first exercise of this art in Rome is stated by Livy to have occurred as follows :—Livius Andronicus, the first Roman dramatist, was accustomed, as were almost all the ancient dramatic writers, to act one of the principal parts of his play himself. His mode of acting in one of his dramas so delighted the audience that, in the phrase of modern times, he was repeatedly *encored* ; and, his voice becoming hoarse and failing him from the frequent recitals of his part, he entreated the spectators to permit a boy to repeat the *words*, while he exhibited the correspondent *action*. His request was granted, and the applause of those who saw the performance was redoubled ; for, as Livy says, he acted the part with much more spirit when he was no longer fatigued by the exertion of his voice.

* "Satis constat contendere eum (Ciceronem) eum ipso histrione (Roscio) solitum, utrum ille sæpius eandem sententiam variis gestibus efficeret, an ipse, per eloquentiæ copiam, sermone diverso pronunciaret. Quæ res ad hanc artis suæ fiduciam Roscium abstraxit, ut *librum conscriberet quo eloquentiam cum histrionâ compararet.*"—*Macrobius, Saturn. II. 10.*

The grave Seneca confesses his passion for the art of pantomime ; and he might have cited the example of Socrates in his favour. Lucian wrote a considerable treatise concerning it. Two anecdotes related by him may be here quoted :—" A distinguished pantomimic actor of the time of Nero prevailed upon the cynic philosopher Demetrius, who was always ridiculing pantomimes and inveighing against the folly of the people in being so much entertained by them, to be present at his performance on a certain occasion. Demetrius was so delighted that he could not contain himself, but shouted out, Man ! I not only see but hear you, for your very hands *speak*."

" A prince of Pontus, on coming to Rome to do homage to the emperor, visited the theatre, and was beyond measure diverted by the performances. When about to leave Rome for his own dominion, Nero desired him to request some present as a mark of his regard. The prince begged his principal pantomimic actor. Being asked the reason of his request he replied that there were many barbarous nations around him, speaking different languages, and it was difficult for him to procure suitable interpreters in his intercourse with them ; but this actor would just serve his purpose."

In these illustrations of the power of gesture nothing is further from my design than to encourage excessive or affected action. The animation of the preacher's mind should give character to his countenance and also direct his arms and hands ; and that which nature dictates, that which proceeds from holy feelings, ought to be indulged, not like the formal saws of the barn-player, but the graceful action of a Christian minister. The feeling of the mind must direct these motions of arm and hand : if the feeling be correct and strong, and no vicious gestures have become habitual through carelessness or affectation, the action will not err materially. A graceful motion of the hands from the left to the right, with occasional elevations and extensions, such as good sense directs or a good living example recommends, should be duly cultivated. But these accomplishments, if acquired at all, must be acquired *out of the pulpit* ; they must be practised in common conversation. The student may sometimes venture to be a little talkative in company, in order to this practice. Every thing that belongs to elocution must begin at home, not in the pulpit ; there it is to appear only as a settled habit and a second nature.

The following description of the manner in which the feelings of the mind are expressed is quoted from an essay of [more than a hundred] years' standing, and may not be unacceptable to some, though to others it may not be necessary.

" *Tranquillity* appears by the composure of the countenance and of all parts of the body. *Joy and delight*, in proportion to their degree, open the countenance and elevate the voice. *Love* brightens the countenance into a smile, and turns the eyes as towards the object ; the tone of the voice is tender and persuasive. *Gratitude* gently elevates the voice and the eyes, and lays the right hand upon the heart. *Admiration* joins with these an air of astonishment and respect. *Veneration* is more grave and serious, with less surprise. *Shame* changes the countenance and declines the head ; the speaker falters in his utterance, or is silent. *Remorse*, or a painful sense of guilt, is further expressed by the right hand striking the breast, the eyes weeping, the body trembling ; and in *true penitence* the eyes are sometimes raised with humble hope. *Fear* opens wide the eyes and mouth,

gives to the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with paleness, projects the hands, draws back the trembling body; the voice is weak; the sentences are short, confused, incoherent. *Pity*, which is a mixture of love and grief, looks down upon distress with lifted hands and tender eyes; the accent is plaintive, often accompanied with tears. *Grief*, if sudden and violent, expresses itself by beating the breast, weeping, and other attitudes approaching to distraction. *Courage* opens the countenance, gives the whole form an erect and graceful air; the voice is firm, even, and articulate. *Anger* expresses itself with rapidity, harshness, noise, and a threatening attitude. *Aversion* or *hatred* draws back the body, turns the face on one side, as from the object, and throws out the hands on the opposite side. *Commendation* is expressed by an open, pleasant, and respectful countenance, a mild tone of voice, and the arms gently extended as towards the person we approve. *Reproof* puts on a stern countenance and a solemn voice, sometimes with a mixture of tenderness and affection. *Invitation* has a moderate degree of the expression of love and respect, with the hand beckoning the person towards us. *Soliciting* or *requesting* adds humility and reverence. *Dismissing* with approbation is done with a kind aspect and tone of voice, the right hand open, and gently waved towards the person.*

Thus you see that a graceful manner, as it respects delivery, comprises a due attention to accent, emphasis, and rests or pauses; the general government of tone, modulation, and cadence; and, lastly, the appropriate expression of the affections or passions.† Surely the preacher that can manage all these well may not be despised as a novice in the pulpit.

Permit me to subjoin the following observations:—

The manner laid down as a general command upon the whole of your public duty. It is not necessary here to enquire whether the expectation of the religious public, with regard to this subject, be reasonable or not; you will fulfil it in the best way you can.

In adopting from the foregoing hints any method of expressing the sentiments of your mind by action or gesture, you must, of course, be regulated according to times and circumstances. These things are not to be strained alike on every service, but in some more, in others less. Language and manner are, on all occasions to be suitable to each other. It is not fit that every topic should receive the highest embellishment. On every occasion there is always one manner more suitable than any other.

“Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable.
Inferior thoughts in high-wrought modes express’d
Are like a clown in regal purple dressed;
For different modes with different subjects sort,
As several garbs with country, town, or court.”

In the public reading of the scriptures, the accentuation, emphasis, tone, modulation, &c., are certainly to be regarded, yet in a temperate manner only. Action with the hands, so suitable for oratory, must in reading the scriptures be dispensed with, except gently laying the hand on the book to give a little increased effect to an emphasis. The animated passions cannot

* Essay on Public Speaking. Longman. 1761.

† Our natural passions must be sanctified to God’s service, or we never can be sanctified in our whole spirit, and soul, and body, 1 Thess. v. 23.

be admitted in this kind of reading; but there should be a feeling of reverence and veneration engaged in the exercise, because the subject is the word of God; and this respectful feeling will give a suitable seriousness to the countenance. To acquire a suitable manner, as to this article, you must attend the reading of the best living examples; for no written advices will be of much avail.

The last observations, in regard to reading, apply very closely also to your public prayers. Here a chastised state of mind will forbid all ornaments of elocution, instead of which there should be the simple expression of a most fervent spirit, even a fervency that burns, and that will, as a means, kindle in the hearts of those that are waiting upon God with you a similar feeling. Your expression should evidently proceed from your very heart; and, as to language, none is so pure and acceptable to real Christians as that which is drawn from the word of God, as Bishop Horsley observes. No book that I know of is so replete with suitable examples as Smith's System of Prayer; yet perhaps in this work the author labours too hard upon the point, and there is frequently an awkwardness of manner introduced by that excess of labour. I am of opinion that real piety, breathed in pure English style, neatly intermixed with scripture language, is the most proper. Rest assured however that the true spirit of prayer can never be brought to your aid in public unless it be cherished in secret communion with God. Here lies the great secret. God will not honour us in public if we do not honour him in private. It is in the closet that all our holy unction is obtained, even for the work of the ministry; and it is here, likewise, that the true manner of our public services is to be acquired.

LECTURE XXI.

TOPIC XVI.

COMPARE WORDS AND ACTIONS WITH SIMILAR WORDS AND ACTIONS.

THIS Topic is not only very extensively available in every kind of discourse, but has also this further advantage, that it is of a very popular character. Judiciously employed, whether by way of illustration or for the purpose of confirming and establishing any truth, it can hardly fail to instruct the most illiterate of our hearers, who may be unable to follow a connected chain of abstract argument, and will at the same time commend itself to the more enlightened. The most important and interesting subjects which demand the preacher's attention are exhibited in the scriptures under a great variety of aspects, expressed in different forms of speech, and mentioned in different connexions. In one passage a fact or doctrine is referred to incidentally, in others it is more largely narrated or discussed. In one place a sentiment is expressed in language highly figurative, in others it is stated in simple and explicit terms: at one time it is mentioned in connexion with an exhortation or a command, at another it is the subject of a divine promise, &c. It is therefore necessary, in such cases, to compare the language of any particular text with similar statements in other parts of the inspired volume, if we intend to convey a just and comprehensive view of the subject to our hearers.

If we are discoursing on the expressions or the example of good men, we may bring before our hearers such similar expressions or actions as are calculated to show the uniform operation of the truth in the hearts of those who embrace it,—the different degrees of excellence or infirmity exemplified in different individuals,—the similarity discoverable between the conduct of the hypocrite and the sincere disciple, and the principles on which they differ, &c. If, on the other hand, the words or actions of wicked men come under our notice as the subject of animadversion, we may compare them with similar statements in the scriptures, with a view to lead the minds of our hearers to reflect on that total depravity in which all by nature participate, to show the insinuating influence and rapid progress of evil principles, to point out the bitter consequences of rebellion against God, which may be more evident from some statements with which the text may be properly compared than from the text itself, &c.

Suppose you were preaching on the conversion of the Philippian jailer, you might remark that the jailer was most probably a man of a ferocious and cruel disposition. When Paul and Silas were committed to his custody, with a charge to keep them safely, he appears to have been devoid of any feeling of common humanity. Without paying any attention whatever to their bleeding wounds, he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But, when the glad tidings of the gospel had reached his heart, the lion was changed into a lamb. Then his bosom was no longer a stranger to tenderness. See Acts xvi. 24, 33. The jailer's conduct may be advantageously compared with that of Zaccheus the publican. There were many points of difference in their characters; but the comparison lies in this, that in both cases we see the ruling, the predominant evil of the heart, subdued by the power of the gospel. Injustice and oppression were the characteristic features of the publicans generally; and Zaccheus who was chief among them, had perhaps become rich through extortion, and was known to the Jews as a man who was emphatically a sinner. But, when he was made acquainted with those things which belonged to his peace, his heart was no longer set on riches, and he not only came forward to restore fourfold to those whom he had wronged by false accusation, but the half of all that he possessed was also devoted to the relief of the poor, &c.

Again: suppose the character of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, to be the subject of discourse, you would naturally compare her conduct with that of Mary, and show the superiority of the latter. Both the sisters were strongly attached to Christ; and we are expressly told that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." But there was a great difference in the degree of their attachment to him, and in the manner in which it was manifested. Martha was anxious to show her sense of gratitude and respect by the entertainment which she prepared: Mary seems to have forgotten every thing else through the interest which she felt in the instructions of her Lord, &c.

The principal illustration which Claude has given us of this Topic is very excellent. He observes, "The evangelist speaks (Acts i. 1) of "the things that Jesus began to do and to teach." Now in Acts vii. 22, he says the same of Moses: "He was mighty in words and deeds." Here you may observe that these two things joined together—doing and teaching—are distinguishing characters of a true prophet, who never separates doctrine

from practice. You may then make an edifying comparison between Moses and Jesus Christ. *Both did and taught*; but there was a very great difference between the teaching of the one and the other. One taught *justice*, the other *mercy*. One *abased*, the other *exalted*. One *terrified*, the other *comforted*. There was also a great difference between the *deeds* of the one and of the other. Most of the miracles of Moses were miracles of *destruction*—insects, frogs, hail, and other things of the same kind with which he chastised the Egyptians. But the miracles of Jesus Christ were always miracles of *benevolence*—raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, &c.*

Passages of scripture may also be advantageously compared with others in which some synonymous expressions are employed, whether with a view to elucidate the meaning (as observed in my lecture on the twelfth Topic) or for the purpose of furnishing materials for comment or illustration. Thus suppose the text to be Ezek. xx. 38: "I will *purge out* from among you the rebels and those that transgress against me:" now see Ps. cxix. 119, "Thou *puttest away* all the wicked of the earth *like dross*." What is meant in the former passage by purging is in the second expressed by *putting away*—making a separation. This is often done in the present life, but will effectually be done in the day of judgment. And the same thing is meant by Isa. i. 25: "I will purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin." Notice likewise Isa. xliii. 21: "This people have I *formed* for myself," &c. Now, if we turn to Isa. li. 1—3, we find this formation illustrated in a manner which furnishes interesting thoughts for enlargement. There we see Abram hewn out of a rock—a rude stone, to be squared, and polished, and made fit to be placed in an eminent situation in God's spiritual building, &c.

In order to the ready and skilful application of this Topic it will be necessary to acquire a good acquaintance with *parallel passages*, and it is a happy circumstance that very great facilities are provided by the labours of biblical men for comparing one part of scripture with another. We owe a debt of gratitude to God and to these worthy men for these facilities. Bagster's Comprehensive Bible contains the most copious collection of parallels; next to this is Scott's Bible; Brown's Self-interpreting Bible is also valuable. In this work the parallels given are not so numerous nor so precise as those of Scott, yet they will be generally found sufficient. Great help will also be found in Cruden's Concordance.†

The study of parallels is recommended by some of the highest authorities in sacred literature, and I cannot accomplish my own purpose or promote the interests of the student better than by quoting a few passages illustra-

* Robinson, under this article, quotes from Bishop Sanderson, who compares the thoughts of God with those of men, Prov. xix. 21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

I. They differ in their *nature*. Ours are *devices*—*fancies*; God's are *counsels*—wise, deliberate *determinations*.

II. They differ in *number*. Our devices have multiplicity and variety, they are *many*; God's counsel is *one* uniform, consistent plan.

III. They differ in their *manner of existing*. Our devices are in our *hearts*—in intention only; God's counsels *stand*—produce the intended effect.

† [There is some value in Warden's System of Revealed Religion. Dr. Eadie has published a good Analytical Concordance to the Scriptures, arranging the texts under various heads. The Rev. J. Inglis has published a most admirable work of this kind—The Bible Text Cyclopædia.]

tive of its importance. The first is from Bishop Van Mildert's (Bishop of Durham) Lectures.

When in any ordinary composition a passage occurs of doubtful meaning with respect to the sentiments or doctrine it conveys, the obvious course of proceeding is to examine what the author himself has delivered in other parts of his work upon the subject, to weigh well the force of any particular expressions he is accustomed to use, and enquire what there might be, in the occasion or circumstances under which he wrote, tending to throw further light upon the immediate object he had in view. This is only to render common justice to the writer; it is necessary both for the discovery of the meaning and to secure him against any wanton charge of error or inconsistency. Now, if this may be justly required in any work of uninspired composition, how much more indispensable must it be when we sit in judgment upon the sacred volume, in which (if we acknowledge its divine original) it is impossible to imagine a failure in judgment or integrity!

The following is from the Rev. Dr. H. F. Burder, who has acquired the reputation of a very correct author:—

God has been pleased, in sundry portions and in divers manners, to speak unto us in his word (Heb. i. 1.); but in all the books of scripture we may trace an admirable unity of design, an intimate connexion of its facts and a complete harmony of its doctrines. In some instances the same truths are conveyed nearly in the same mode of expression; in other instances the same sentiments are clothed with a beautiful variety of language. While we are interested in discovering some of the indications of mental diversity among the sacred writers, we clearly see that the whole volume of revelation is distinguished by a certain characteristic style and phraseology altogether its own, and which for simplicity, dignity, energy, and freeness, must be allowed to have no parallel. Now if there be in the various parts of scripture such important coincidences of sentiment, of language, and of idiom, it is evident we proceed on just and rational principles in comparing together passages that have some just degree of resemblance, and in applying those the meaning of which is clear to the illustration of such as are involved in some degree of obscurity.

Bishop Horsley furnishes a good illustration of the point in hand, and, although it is long, I cannot persuade myself to mutilate it, since it affords a fine specimen of biblical criticism, of energetic conception, of bold yet simple language. It is also an incomparable exhibition of explicatory discourse, and will add to what I have said on that subject (Lecture III.), and refresh the mind of the student, so that several purposes will be promoted at the same time. The text adopted is Ps. xcvi. 7: "Worship him, all you gods;" but in fact the whole Psalm is explicated.

It should be a rule, with every one who would read the holy scriptures with advantage and improvement, to compare every text which may seem important for the doctrine it contains, or remarkable for the turn of expression, with the parallel passages in other parts of holy writ, that is, with the passages in which the subject matter is the same, the sense equivalent, or the turn of expression similar. These parallel passages are easily found by the marginal references in the Bibles of the larger form. It were to be wished, indeed, that no Bibles were printed without the margin. It is to be hoped that the objection obviously arising from the necessary augmentation in the price of the book may some time or other be removed by the charity of religious associations. Meanwhile those who can afford to purchase the larger Bibles should be diligent in the improvement of the means with which Providence has furnished them. Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and the New Testaments. When you read the Old Testament, if you perceive by the margin that any particular passage is cited in the New, turn to that passage of the New to which the margin refers, that you may see in what manner, in what sense, and to what purpose, the words of the more ancient are alleged by the later writer, who, in many instances, may be supposed to have received clearer light upon the same subject. On the other hand, when in the New Testament you meet with citations from the Old, always consult the original writer, that you may have the satisfaction of judging for yourselves how far the passage alleged makes for the argument which it is brought

to support. In doing this you will imitate the example of the godly Jews of Berea, which is recorded with approbation in the Acts of the Apostles (xvii.), who—when Paul and Silas reasoned with them out of the scriptures of the Old Testament, clearly setting before them the prophecies concerning the Messiah and the accomplishment of those prophecies in Jesus, whom they preached—“searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so.” These Berean Jews compared the parallel passages of St. Paul’s oral doctrine with the written scriptures of the Old Testament. And *we now* should with equal diligence compare the written doctrine of St. Paul, and of his fellow-labourers, with the writings of the Old Testament.

It is incredible, to any one who has not in some degree made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation by studying the scriptures in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other. I will not scruple to assert that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God’s blessing, he will become learned in every thing relating to his religion in such a degree that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments or by the false assertions of those who endeavour to engraft their own opinions upon the oracles of God. He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy except what is to be learned from the sacred books, which indeed contain the highest philosophy adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may safely remain ignorant of all history except so much of the history of the first ages of the Jewish and of the Christian church as is to be gathered from the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. Let him study these in the manner I recommend, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which those books were dictated, and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian’s faith. The Bible thus studied will indeed prove to be, what we protestants esteem it, a certain and sufficient rule of faith and practice, a helmet of salvation which alone may quench the fiery darts of the wicked. My text, I trust, will prove a striking instance of the truth of these assertions.

If in argument with any of the false teachers of the present day I were to allege this text of the psalmist in proof of our Lord’s divinity, my antagonist would probably reply that our Lord is not once mentioned in the psalm, that the subject of the psalm is an assertion of the proper divinity of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as distinguished from the imaginary deities which the heathen worshipped. This psalm therefore which proposes Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as the sole object of worship to men and angels, is alleged, he would say, to no purpose in justification of worship paid to another person. And, to any who might know nothing more of the true sense of this passage than may appear in the words taken by themselves, my adversary might seem to have the better in the argument. I think I should seem to myself to stand confuted if I knew no more of the meaning of the text, or rather of the inspired song of which it makes a part, than an inattentive reader might collect from a hasty view of its general purport. But observe the references in the margin of the Bible, and you will find that a parallel passage occurs in the epistle to the Hebrews, in the first chapter, at the sixth verse. Turn to this passage of the epistle, and there you will find this text of the psalmist cited by St. Paul to this very purpose, namely, to prove that adoration is due from the blessed angels of God to the only-begotten Son; for thus he reasons: “When he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” The only passage in the Old Testament, as the Hebrew text now stands, in which this is said, is this seventh verse of the ninety-seventh psalm. The words of the psalmist indeed are these, “Worship him, all you gods.” The apostle, that he might clearly exclude a plurality of gods, while he asserts the Godhead of the Son, thinks proper to explain the psalmist’s words, by substituting “all the angels of God” for “all the gods.” But it is very evident that the First-begotten was, in the apostle’s judgment, the object of worship propounded by the psalmist, otherwise these words of the psalmist, upon which he calls upon the angels to worship Jehovah, were alleged to no purpose in proof of the Son’s natural pre-eminence above the angels; for either the Son is the object of worship intended by the psalmist, or the Son himself is to bear a part in the worship so universally enjoined.

But, further, the collation of the psalmist’s text with the apostle’s citation will not

only enable the unlearned Christian to discover a sense of the psalmist's words not very obvious in the words themselves, but it will also give him certain, although summary, information upon a point of ecclesiastical antiquity of great importance, upon which the illiterate cannot be informed by any other means. In the late attempts to revive the Ebionæan* heresy, much stress has been laid, by the leaders of the impious confederacy, upon the opinions of the primitive church of Jerusalem. They tell you, with great confidence, that the Redeemer was never worshipped, nor his divinity acknowledged, by the members of that church. The assertion has indeed no other foundation than the ignorance of those who make it, who confound a miserable sect, which separated from the church of Jerusalem, with the church itself. But how is the truth of the fact to be proved to the illiterate Christian, unread in the history of the primitive ages, who yet must feel some alarm and disquietude when he is told that he has been catechised in a faith never held by those first and best Christians, the converts of the apostles? Holy writ, if he is diligent in consulting it, will relieve his scruples and remove his doubts, not only upon the principal matter in dispute, but upon this particular historical question. It must be obvious to every understanding that when any passage in the Old Testament is cited by writers of the New, in confirmation of any particular doctrine, without any disquisition concerning the sense of the citation or any attempt to fix a particular sense upon it which may suit the writer's purpose—it must be evident, I say, that a text thus cited was generally understood at the time by those to whom the argument was addressed; for a text alleged in any sense not generally admitted could be no proof to those who should be inclined to call in question the sense imposed. The Hebrews, therefore, to whom the apostle produces this text of the psalmist in proof of the high dignity of the Redeemer's nature, agreed with the apostle concerning the sense of the psalmist's words. They well understood that the psalmist calls upon the angels to worship the only-begotten Son. And who were these Hebrews? The very name imports that they were Jews by birth; they were, indeed, the Jewish converts settled in Palestine. And since the epistle was written during St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, which might easily be made to appear from the epistle itself, and St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome ended about the thirtieth year after our Lord's ascension, they were no other than the *first race* of Jewish Christians, who agreed with St. Paul that the Redeemer is the object of worship propounded to the angels by the psalmist. And thus by this plain remark, and by the authority of the sacred books, the unlearned Christian may settle his own mind, and put to shame and silence the disturbers of his faith.

But this is not the whole of the information which the unlearned Christian may draw from the psalmist's text, compared with the apostle's citation. The apostle cites the psalmist's words as spoken when the First-begotten was introduced into the world, that is to say, to mankind; for the word in the original literally signifies, not the universe, but this globe which is inhabited by men, to which the First-begotten was in these later ages introduced by the promulgation of the gospel. Now, since the occasion upon which these words were spoken was an introduction of the First-begotten into the world, if these words are nowhere to be found but in the ninety-seventh psalm, it follows that this ninety-seventh psalm is that introduction of the First-begotten into the world of which the apostle speaks. Hence the unlearned Christian may derive this useful information, that the true subject of the ninety-seventh psalm, as it was understood by St. Paul and by the church at Jerusalem, to which this epistle is addressed, within thirty years after our Lord's ascension, when that church must have been entirely composed of our Lord's own followers and the immediate converts of the apostles, was not, as it might seem to any one not deeply versed in the prophetic language, an assertion of God's natural dominion over the universe, but a prophecy of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom by the preaching of the gospel, and the general conversion of idolators to the service of the true God. The First-begotten is the Lord, or rather Jehovah, for that is the word used in the original, whose kingdom is proclaimed as an occasion of joy and thanksgiving to the whole world.

And that this was no arbitrary interpretation of the psalm, imagined by enthusiasts or invented by impostors, to make the sacred oracles accord with their own conceits or with their own designs, will appear by a closer inspection of the psalm itself, which cannot be consistently expounded of any other king nor of any other kingdom.

That Jehovah's kingdom, in some sense or other, is the subject of this divine song, cannot be made a question; for thus it opens—"Jehovah reigneth." The psalm there-

* See Buck's Theological Dictionary on the word,

fore must be understood of God's natural kingdom over his whole creation, of his particular kingdom over the Jews, his chosen people, or of that kingdom which is called in the New Testament the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ. God's peculiar kingdom over the Jews cannot be the subject of this psalm because all nations of the earth are called upon to rejoice in the acknowledgment of this great truth : " Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice ; let the many isles be glad thereof." The same consideration, that Jehovah's kingdom is mentioned as a subject of general thanksgiving, proves that God's universal dominion over his whole creation cannot be the kingdom in the prophet's mind ; for in this kingdom a great majority of the ancient world, the idolators, were considered, not as subjects who might rejoice in the glory of their monarch, but as rebels who had every thing to fear from his just resentment. God's government of the world was to them no cause of joy otherwise than as the erection of Christ's kingdom, which was to be the means of their deliverance, was a part of the general scheme of Providence. It remains, therefore, that Christ's kingdom is that kingdom of Jehovah which the inspired poet celebrates as the occasion of universal joy. And this will further appear by the sequel of the song. After four verses, in which the transcendent glory, the irresistible power, and inscrutable perfection of the Lord, who to the joy of all nations reigneth, are painted in poetical images, taken partly from the awful scene on Sinai which accompanied the delivery of the law, partly from other manifestations of God's presence with the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, he proceeds, in the sixth verse, " The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory." We read in the nineteenth psalm that " the heavens declare the glory of God." And the glory of God, the power and the intelligence of the Creator, is indeed visibly declared in the fabric of the material world. But I cannot see how the structure of the heavens can demonstrate the *righteousness* of God. Wisdom and power may be displayed in the contrivance of an inanimate machine ; but righteousness cannot appear in the arrangement of the parts or the direction of the motions of lifeless matter. The heavens, therefore, in their external structure, cannot declare their Maker's righteousness : but the heavens, in another sense, attested the righteousness of Christ, when the voice from heaven declared him the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased, and when the preternatural darkness of the sun at the crucifixion, and other agonies of nature, drew that confession from the heathen centurion who attended the execution, that the suffering Jesus was the Son of God.

It is added, " And all the people see his glory." It is much to be regretted that our translators, over-studious of the purity of their English style, have, through the whole Bible, neglected a distinction constantly observed in the original between *people* in the singular and *peoples* in the plural. The word *people*, in the singular, for the most part denotes God's chosen people, the Jewish nation, unless any other particular people happen to be the subject of discourse. But *peoples*, in the plural, is put for all the other races of mankind, as distinct from the chosen people. The word here is in the plural form, " and all the peoples see his glory." But when, or in what sense, did any of the peoples, the idolatrous nations, see the glory of God ? Literally they never saw his glory. The effulgence of the Shechinah never was displayed to them, except when it blazed forth upon the Egyptians to strike them with a panic, or when the towering pillar of flame which marshalled the Israelites in the wilderness was seen by the inhabitants of Palestine and Arabia as a threatening meteor in their sky. Intellectually, no idolators ever saw the glory of God, for they never acknowledged his power and Godhead ; had they thus seen his glory they would have ceased to be idolators. But *all the peoples*, upon the preaching of the gospel, saw the glory of Christ. They saw it literally in the miracles performed by his apostles ; they saw it spiritually when they perceived the purity of his precepts, when they acknowledged the truth of his doctrine, when they embraced the profession of Christianity, and owned Christ for their Saviour and their God.

The psalmist goes on, " Confounded be all those that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols : worship him, all you gods." In the original this verse has not at all the form of a malediction, which it has acquired in our translation from the use of the strong word *confounded*. " Let them be ashamed : " this is the utmost that the psalmist says. The prayer that they may be ashamed of their folly and repent of it is very different from an imprecation of confusion. But in truth the psalmist rather seems to speak prophetically, without any thing either of prayer or imprecation : " They shall be ashamed." Having seen the glory of Christ, they shall be ashamed of the idols which, in the times of their ignorance, they worshipped. In the eighth

and ninth verses, looking forward to the times when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and the remnant of Israel shall turn to the Lord, he describes the daughters of Judah as rejoicing at the news of the mercy extended to the Gentile world, and exulting in the universal extent of Jehovah's kingdom and the general acknowledgment of his Godhead.

In the tenth verse, having in view, as it should seem, the sufferings which the first preachers were destined to endure, he exhorts those who love Jehovah to adhere at all hazards to their duty, in the assurance that their powerful Lord, on whom they have fixed their love, "preserveth the souls of his saints, and delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." "Light," he adds, "is sown for the righteous," or, to render the words more strictly, "Light is shed over the Just One, and gladness upon the upright of heart." The *just* and the *just one* are two different words, the one a collective noun expressing a multitude, the other expressive of a single person. These two words are unfortunately confounded in our English Bibles. The Just One is, I think, in many passages of the Psalms, of which I take this to be one, an appellation which exclusively belongs to Christ in his human character. Light, for splendour, is an easy image for a condition of prosperity and grandeur. "Light is shed over the Just One, the man Christ Jesus, who is now exalted at the right hand of God." And this light shed on him is a source of gladness to all the upright in heart. "Rejoice in Jehovah, therefore, you righteous; rejoice in him by whom you are yourselves united to the first principle of goodness, being, power, happiness, and glory; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

Now, besides the purposes I hinted at before, this sermon is a fine vindication of the divinity of Christ, and it teaches us how we should explain the Psalms in a manner corresponding with the view which Horsley, Horne, and many others, have taken of these sacred compositions.*

Whatever is calculated to elucidate or enrich our subject by comparing words and actions with similar words and actions may properly be considered as falling under the present Topic, and I shall here introduce an example from Walker, in which he illustrates the nature of the gospel ministry generally by comparing it with the primitive ministry. His text is 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," &c.; and he proposes,

I. To explain the account given us in the text of the nature of our office as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

II. To point out the corresponding obligations incumbent on Christians with regard to those entrusted with this ministry.

Under the former head of discourse he observes—

In order to have clear apprehensions of this subject it will be necessary to look back to the origin of the office, and see wherein it differed at its first appointment from the circumstances in which it exists at present. I commence by observing that the ministry of the word is, in all essential points, the same ever since it was ordained as an employment. At the same time it is plain that several circumstances attending it are

* The above excellent remarks on parallelisms of texts lead us to reflect on the parallelisms of *subjects* which I have attempted to establish throughout the Topics; these form a point of observation which may be called the *doctrine of transitions*, a passing over to relative branches of divine knowledge (see Topic IV.) These transitions admit of a great variety of particular applications of the leading doctrines of scripture, few in number, manifold in amplification. It is the art of combination, of associating things scattered abroad in scripture, but which really may be systematized in the practice of teaching. Sometimes this will be done by way of illustration, or amplification, or inference, or confirmation; and we may see that this is the thread of Horsley's argument last quoted by way of confirmation. We here see how one thing hangs upon another: for instance, how many truths hang upon the fall of man, how many on the recovery. We see the regular connexion of cause and effect, of designs and accomplishments, and a thousand other things of great importance in discussion. —See *James Douglas, Esq., on Errors in Religion*, p. 303, 304, &c.

considerably varied. The ordinary call to the office which now takes place is very different from the miraculous unction by which men were consecrated to it in former times. Their vocation was more immediate, more striking, and attended with more ample powers as well as more splendid effects. From their immediate inspiration an authority was derived to their words to which none of us can justly pretend. They promised—and the blessings of time and eternity were conveyed with their words; they threatened—and vengeance from heaven followed without delay.

The apostles enjoyed from their divine Master the communication of his own powers over nature, which they exercised even to a greater degree than Jesus himself chose to do. All these extraordinary powers have now ceased. The pastors of the Christian church are now men in all respects like yourselves, to whom God has conveyed authority to preach the word. Still, however, the original proposition stands true, namely, that the office is, in all essential points, the same as exercised both by them and us; for it is easy to conceive that the superior prerogatives which have been mentioned vary some circumstances in the ministry only, but do not, in any degree, alter its nature. The essence of the office—the foundations of pastoral authority—remain unimpaired. His promise is unalterable: “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”* From his holy hill, where he sits as King of Zion, he provides for the perpetuity of his church, and he does now give pastors and teachers, if not apostles and prophets, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

This at the present time is the state of the ministry amongst us; so that if the doctrines we set forth are agreeable to the scriptures, if the morality we enforce is a conversation becoming the gospel, we are in all respects to be accounted of as “the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” according to the words of the text; that is, we shall be worthy of these appellations if we be found *faithful*.†

One more view of comparison in reference to the ministry may not be unacceptable. Take 1 Pet. iv. 11: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

Now here is a presumption that some do not speak according to “the oracles of God.” And here is the comparison. Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John animadvert, in very severe terms, upon the principles and conduct of such men. These bold and presumptuous men dare to pass their vile notions for the oracles of God. These notions are forgeries: their early fathers were the false prophets with whom such men as Elijah, and particularly Jeremiah, had to contend. They are not to be known by their garments, nor by their canting expressions, nor by their bold assumptions, but by the infallible rule of our Saviour: “By their fruits you shall know them.” These fruits are various, and their wiles many. Immorality: “Professing to know God, in works they deny him.” Or they “separate themselves;” this is a mark of easy application. They wish their people to become a selfish people, and their unity is not the unity of the gospel. True gospel unity is not a party spirit, but a universal spirit; it aims at uniting all mankind. Or these false teachers separate doctrine and practice, the means from the end, one part of God’s word from other parts, placing one set of

* It has been observed that the Holy Spirit uses three expressions to show the perpetuity of this promise:—1. *Αἰών*, answering to the Hebrew word *עולם*, which imports a continuance to the end of the world. 2. *Συντελεία εως της συντελείας του αιώνος*. As the first expression is simply affirmative, the second is something like a denial of the contrary—the denial of a termination before the world’s end. 3. *Παράς τας ημερας*—all days and successions of times; for it is not *μεθ υμων ημερας υμων*—with you all your days, which might soon be ended; but it is *παράς τας ημερας*—all days till days are no more. From these phrases it is evident that, as a gospel ministry is to be perpetuated till days are done, so the divine presence will be commensurate therewith. It would be too narrow an interpretation of this text, as to Christ’s being with them to the end of the world, to say that he is no longer with them than they live in the world; it would yet be more absurd to say that their personal ministry was coeval with the world: wherefore the inference is obvious, that, as the preaching of the gospel was the substance of their commission to all the world, so, while the world stands, there should be preachers thereof, and Christ’s presence with them.—*Potts’ Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 49.

† Walker, vol. iv.

texts in array against another ; or they are destitute of Christian charity, meekness, love, and forbearance, or impatient of all control and every degree of authority, though ever so slight and ever so scriptural. Others are deniers of Christ's proper divinity, of free grace, and justification by faith, or of Christ's perpetual ordinances, or introducers of ordinances which Christ never ordained. They are cavillers and disputers, mixers of Christianity and philosophy ; "from such turn away : " for one is weary of naming more of their absurdities. But, in favour of some amongst the private hearers of such mischievous leaders, we must make a difference. They are the led of such leaders as I have named ; the deceived, not deceivers. "The Lord knoweth those that are his."

Now, on the other hand, the true ministers "speak according to the oracles of God" as to all main and essential subjects, and in general, though they may differ in particular articles, yet they "hold the head." The word of God is their rule, the foundation of their doctrines ; the Spirit of God is their instructor. Instead of being proud and self-willed, they allow themselves to be led, knowing their own ignorance, weakness, and insufficiency ; instead of following their own fancies, they think and "speak according to the oracles of God."

The word here called oracles (from an Old Testament usage) is *the rule*. These oracles are known to be divine from their perfect conformity to the divine nature—that notion of the divine nature which, even without scripture, evidently pertains to him, though seen more clearly in scripture light.

1. Is God a spirit? His word (law and gospel), with all its important contents, is of a spiritual nature : "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," John vi. 63. "The law is spiritual," Rom. vii. 14, and viii. 2.

2. Is our blessed Redeemer "the Lord God omnipotent?" His gospel is "the power of God to salvation," Rom. i. 16.

3. Is God all-sufficient? So are "the holy scriptures, able to make wise unto salvation," 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

4. Is he a king to exercise kingly power? The word is his bow by which he subdues the people under him. See Ps. xix. 7 ; Hab. iii. 9 ; Eph. vi. 17 ; Heb. iv. 12 ; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

5. Is he a judge? He will judge every man according to Christ's gospel, Rom. ii. 16.

6. Is Christ the true God and eternal life? His word is the word of truth, John i. 17. It contains the words of eternal life, John vi. 68.

7. Is he faithful? His word is the faithful word, Ps. cxix. 138.

8. Is God just? His word is the word of righteousness, Heb. vi. 13.

9. Is he God our Saviour? His gospel is the word of our salvation, Acts xiii. 26.

10. Is he unchangeable? The gospel is the everlasting gospel, Mark xiii. 31 ; Rev. xiv. 6.

11. Is he all-wise? In his word "he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," Eph. i. 8.

12. Is he sovereign ruler? His word is his will, Matt. vii. 21 ; 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15.

13. Is he full of grace? The gospel is the word of his grace, Acts xx. 24, 32.

14. Is he essentially good? His word is good, Rom. vii. 12.

15. Is he holy? His word is pure, Ps. cxix. 140.

16. Is he wonderful? His testimonies are wonderful, Ps. cxix. 129.

17. Is Christ precious? His promises are so, 2 Pet. i. 4.

18. Is he unsearchable? His gospel is an exhibition of the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. iii. 8.

Now here is a conformity between the character of God and of Christ and the holy oracles ; and, as there is a perfect conformity between the character of God and the excellency of his word, so there must be a similar conformity between this divine word and the matter of our preaching. As Moses had very strict orders respecting the tabernacle—he was to "make all things according to the pattern shown to him in the mount"—so preachers are to preach exactly according to truth. To this end their preaching must be pure and entire—pure in the matter, entire as to the substance. In all kinds of doctrinal, practical, and evangelical subjects, they must conform to the word, the whole word, and nothing but the word. If

you look over the various complaints of Christ and his apostles, concerning those that have endeavoured to corrupt the word of God—going through the whole of the New Testament with this particular view—you will obtain great light upon the subject. If, on the other hand, you examine the whole scriptures for yourselves, to see what is exhibited for truth and in what light and on what occasions they were respectively written, and the objects to which they were evidently designed to lead, &c., you will be in a condition to preach “according to the oracles of God.” And if this be done carefully and diligently, with much prayer to God, you will be able to preach the divine oracles without much assistance from the theories of men, even of the best of men, and with the least liability of error.

Among the subjects which will come under your notice in relation to this Topic, you will sometimes be called upon to compare those scriptures which contain the *threatenings of God* with those which record their *fulfilment*. In many instances recorded in scripture the agreement is awfully minute: as the destruction of the antediluvian world and of Sodom and Gomorrah, the captivity of the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem, &c. Here the comparison is perfectly easy; but in many instances threatenings have been suspended or reversed, and these present a difficulty which requires much of caution and of wisdom. We must either admit that such threatenings were not intended to be taken absolutely and unconditionally, though no conditions are expressed, or that our ordinary ideas of the divine unchangeableness are incorrect, though apparently justified by the strongest expressions of scripture, and agreeing with the clearest deductions of reason.

The awful threatenings of absolute reprobation in regard to their temporal state have been fulfilled in many recorded instances where the parties have filled up the measure of their iniquities, as the Sodomites, the Canaanites, &c., in whom the light of nature and of conscience had ceased to operate, who had “given themselves over to work all kinds of iniquity with greediness.” These characters brought themselves into this state: they passed their day of trial without any improvement, and therefore “judgment came upon them to the uttermost,” and the only end remaining was that they might become examples of “the righteous judgment of God.” In some of these instances special warnings were given. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the antediluvians, but without effect. In other instances we do not know that any special communication was made. The Sodomites had it not; and this did give a relief to their character, for our Lord intimates that, if they had received such communications, they would or they might have repented; but they sinned against the light of nature and the holy example of Lot, and they perished without warning in any special form, to which they had no claim on the ground of justice. In other instances Jehovah, as supreme governor of the world, has passed threatenings on nations which had not their effect for a long season; these threatenings were not communicated to the wicked nations themselves, but mentioned as private communications to his servants the prophets; for “usually “the Lord did nothing but he revealed his secret to the prophets,” Amos iii. 7. This was remarkably fulfilled in the intimation made to Abram respecting Sodom; and in the Revelations it is said to John, “Come and I will show you the judgment of the great whore.” Yet the grace of regular warnings seems not to have been given, for reasons above assigned. In these and similar cases the threatenings and their accomplishments were

written "within and without"—in the mind of God and by outward intimations to the prophets.

There seem also to be many threatenings against the Lord's people if they depart from their steadfastness, or alter their course from good to bad, as Rom. viii. 13, "If you live after the flesh you shall die." Even here there must be a saving clause for returning backsliders, and such a sentence may in the hands of the Spirit bring the backslider to a sense of his guilt and danger; upon this Mr. Caryl says, "Those who are above all curses may be threatened with a curse, and those who shall certainly be preserved from doing that which inevitably brings the curse may be told of a curse in case they should do it."*

Having premised these remarks I proceed to observe that, apart from such instances, whenever God has condescended to hold any intercourse with his sinning creatures by sending a message to them, though conveyed in the form of a threatening, it is a certain indication that they were not absolutely reprobated. I submit that if any of the antediluvians had repented, by the preaching of Noah, a place of refuge would have been provided for them, and that wherever a denunciation has been conveyed to a people it carries, whether expressed or not, an implied contingency that if they repented they might and would be saved; the case of the Ninevites, left upon record for our instruction, is exactly to the point. Now, if this be correct, the difficulty is surmounted; God's justice, truth, and unchangeableness are not compromised in the least. God wills a further day of trial to his sinning creatures; he puts it upon this issue. Whether it be said simply "You shall perish," or whether the condition be expressed, "Except you repent you shall perish," it makes no difference at all. The very circumstance of a communication speaks for itself; it proves that "the day of grace is not past," therefore sentences reversed are no reflection upon the character of Jehovah; they are in perfect agreement with all just legislation, and are not at variance with the divine prescience.

I choose to put the question upon this representation rather than upon what has been asserted, "That God *changes not*, but he *wills a change*," which I confess I cannot understand. This must still be a *willing* and a counter-willing; but upon my humble suggestions you have only to admit the implied accompaniment to the threatening, and this knotty point is untied. It seems to me evident that a righteous, intelligent, and good governor, will rule his creatures in this manner. He will preserve in his determinations a view to man as an accountable creature, as a rational probationary, to be influenced by hope and fear to choose the wisest course; otherwise we had better at once return to the notion of the Stoics, "that all things are governed by a certain and inevitable necessity."

I further beg leave to say, lest I should be supposed to give up a doctrine which I firmly believe, that as God has in some instances given no special warnings, but has in others given such warnings, wherein much sovereignty is seen, so he can exercise a further act of grace towards his sinning creatures; he can secretly and specially incline and dispose some of them, not

* Upon this difficult subject I refer to Watson's Theological Institutes, vol. i. p. 419, 420; again 442—446; Magee on the Atonement, vol. i., p. 136. I shall only quote Dr. Jortin, vol. i., p. 29, on Exodus xx. 5, 6. "When God threatens he threatens what he may do, not what he must do: though he be obliged by his perfections to do nothing unjust, he is not obliged to do every thing that may possibly be done."

only to repentance, but to faith in his mercy ; and it is hence that the Ninevites expressed such faith as a peradventure : " Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? " Jonah iii. 2. As he inclined the idolatrous Lydia, by " opening her heart," so he sometimes saves a " brand from the burning " and the chief of sinners, and this without destroying man's free-agency, or tarnishing his adorable perfections, which he exercises with a sovereign hand.

But, to return to the comparison of God's threatenings with their fulfilments ; you have here a view how to make use of this Topic in preaching to sinners. I have said that wherever God sends a message to a people by a preacher of the gospel, and the gospel in his hand as his warrant, it is always to be presumed that the people are not reprobated ; if they were, an overruling providence would withhold this gospel ; you may therefore excite fears and hopes ; you may adduce instances of sundry threatenings against sinners, and compare them with sundry fulfilments, as the apostles Peter and Jude did, and especially as Paul did in the third and fourth chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews ; and you may say with all boldness, " How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation," &c. This comparison of things is well adapted to awaken " the dead in sin." Your instances are of the most unexceptionable character, your position is firm, and your inference cannot be denied ; nay, you may say that ancient refusals of mercy were not attended with the same aggravated guilt which is connected with the rejection of mercy under the clear discoveries of the gospel, which at its beginning was proclaimed by our Lord Jesus himself with the most wonderful display of miracles, and the truth of which is evidenced to this day to us by those who wrote the gospel history. Here, I say, keep closely and faithfully to the comparison, and suffer them not to escape the consequence of that comparison.

The same course must be taken in respect to any that may have declined from the gospel, and perhaps this is the true point of St. Paul's argument above quoted. The Israelites were lost, or many of them, by the spirit of apostasy ; for in their hearts they " turned back to Egypt : " their unbelief was predominant over all kinds of miracles and authorities.

But the more agreeable part of your duty remains ; that is, to say with Paul in another place, and which is quoted from prophecy and applied to the gospel dispensation, " Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." You may announce that even now, bad as their case is, they are not as yet reprobated ; that it is yet " the day of salvation." And here you may enter into another comparison of facts. As the Hebrew Christians in St. Paul's time " did actually by believing enter into rest "—the earnest of heaven felt in their hearts—so you may assure sinners that on their believing the testimony of the gospel they shall even now enjoy that justifying grace which brings peace with it ; thus you excite and operate both upon fear and hope.

Another subject of some importance suggested by our Topic is that of comparing the *commands of scripture with its promises*. This will often furnish much that is instructive and edifying, and is necessary in order to solve as far as possible the apparent inconsistency of commands being given to those whose innate and essential depravity unfits them for performing the things enjoined, and to calm the disquietudes of those who feel their own insufficiency to " enter into peace " by accurate compliance with the

commands, as a means of obtaining the blessings or the promises annexed to them. On this account many are apt to "write bitter things against themselves" to whom the comfort of pardon and peace belongs.

We undoubtedly allow the force of the commands; and the necessity of divine assistance in order to all holy obedience must be ceded to us. The commands stand upon the right which God has over us as his creatures; the promises stand upon his purpose of grace. The command is to direct; the promise is to cheer and to console. Man's weakness, alas! is too evident to need demonstration, but, if any were necessary, it is to be found in the several prayers of God's people offered up for assistance, which would not have been offered if they had not been conscious of their own instability. Let us however beware of so stating the necessity of divine influence as to neutralize human responsibility, as if it arose from an inability distinct from the waywardness of the human heart, whereas nothing can be clearer than that the inability of man is altogether of a moral and not of a physical nature.

The late Mr. Wilks some years ago considered this subject, and drew up a collection of commands, each accompanied with a scriptural prayer for grace to obey it, and also with an absolute promise. The work to which I refer is entitled *Scripture Harmony*; and lest this little production should be lost through its minuteness, or at least may not fall into the hands of the majority of my readers, I shall transcribe into these pages a portion of it, the value of which every divinity student will readily appreciate.

Much has been said, by many good but mistaken people, concerning our ability to fulfil what they term the *conditions* of the New Covenant. Much of the preceptive part of revelation has been referred to in support of this opinion; and the common, plausible conclusions drawn from such scripture is 'that it is inconsistent in the divine Being to enjoin what we are unable to perform.' This sentiment, as it is flattering to human nature, has seduced some, and frequently distressed others. The present design therefore is to show the scripture bearings upon this subject. Here in every instance we have, 1. A command. 2. A supplication for aid. And, 3. A direct promise of such aid.

Ezek. xviii. 31: Make you a new heart, &c.

Ps. li. 10: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26: A new heart also will I give you.

1 Cor. v. 7: Purge out the old leaven, &c.

Ps. li. 7: Purge me with hyssop, &c.

Isa. i. 25: I will purge away thy dross.

Ezek. xxxiii. 11: Turn you from your evil ways, &c.

Jer. xxxi. 18: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.

Rom. xi. 26: There shall come out of Zion a deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Amos iv. 12: Prepare to meet thy God, &c.

1 Chron. xxix. 18: Prepare their hearts unto thee.

Ps. x. 17: Thou wilt prepare their heart.

Eph. v. 14: Awake thou that sleepest.

Ps. cxix. 25: Quicken thou me, &c.

John v. 25: The dead shall hear my voice.

Isa. lv. 2: Eat you that which is good.

Ps. xc. 14: Satisfy us with thy mercy.

Jer. xxxi. 14: I will satisfy them with fatness; they shall be satisfied with my goodness.

1 Chron. xxviii. 9: Know thou the God of thy fathers.

Exod. xxxiii. 13: Show me now thy ways.

Jer. xxxi. 14: They shall all know me.

Isa. lv. 6: Seek you the Lord while he may be found.

Job. xxiii. 3: O that I knew where I might find him!

Jer. xxix. 13, 14: You shall find me, &c.

Rev. iii. 18: Anoint thine eyes, &c.
 Ps. cxix. 18: Open thou mine eyes, &c.
 Isa. xxix. 18: The blind shall see out of obscurity, &c.
 Job. xxii. 22: Receive the law at his mouth, &c.
 Ps. cxix. 36: Incline my heart, &c.
 Jer. xxxi. 33: I will write my law in their hearts, &c.
 Prov. iv. 23: Keep thy heart with all diligence.
 Ps. xxv. 20: O keep my soul and deliver me.
 Isa. xxvii. 3: I the Lord do keep it, &c.
 2 Chron. xx. 20: Believe in the Lord your God.
 Acts xvi. 31: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 Mark ix. 24: Help thou mine unbelief, &c.
 Zeph. iii. 12: They shall trust in the name of the Lord.
 Acts ii. 40: Save yourselves, &c.
 Jer. xvii. 14: Save me, and I shall be saved.
 Isa. xlv. 17: Israel shall be saved, &c.
 Isa. i. 16: Wash you, make you clean.
 Ps. li. 2: Wash me thoroughly, &c.
 Ezek. xxxvi. 25: I will sprinkle clean water upon you, &c.
 Ezek. xviii. 31: Cast away all your transgressions.
 Hos. xiv. 2: Take away all iniquity.
 Isa. vi. 7: Thy iniquity is taken away.
 Hag. i. 5: Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways.
 Ps. cxix. 5: O that my ways were directed, &c.
 Ezek. xxxvi. 31: Then shall you remember your evil ways.
 Isa. xxvi. 20: Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers; hide thyself, &c.
 Ps. xvii. 8: Keep me as the apple of the eye.
 Job. v. 21: Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of tongues.
 Matt. xi. 28: Come unto me all you that labour.
 Cant. i. 4: Draw me, and we will run after thee.
 John vi. 37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.
 Matt. xi. 29: Learn of me, &c.
 Job. xxxiv. 32: That which I see not, teach thou me.
 John vi. 45: They shall be all taught of God.
 John xv. 4: Abide in me.
 Ps. li. 11: Cast me not away from thee.
 John x. 28: They shall never perish.
 Rom. vi. 12: Let not sin reign in you.
 Ps. xix. 13: Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, &c.
 Rom. vi. 4: Sin shall not have dominion over you, &c.
 Gal. v. 1: Stand fast, therefore, &c.
 Ps. cxix. 117: Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.
 Rom. xiv. 14: He shall be holden up.
 Mark xiv. 38: Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation, &c.
 Matt. vi. 13: Lead us not into temptation.
 1 Cor. x. 13: He will not suffer you to be tempted above your strength.
 1 Thes. v. 17: Pray without ceasing.
 Luke xi. 1: Lord, teach us to pray.
 Zech. xii. 10: I will pour out the Spirit of grace and of supplications, &c.

Compare again these passages, viz. :

1 Pet. v. 8, 9; Ps. xxii. 21; Rom. xvi. 20.
 2 Pet. iii. 18; Hab. iii. 2; Hos. xiv. 7.
 Rev. ii. 10; Ps. xxv. 21; Isa. xlv. 4.

I think no preacher can go far in his work without meeting some difficulty on the subject of commands, and especially as many are to be found in the

New Testament, which we are accustomed to think savours most of grace ; nay, I think the greater number are to be found here. A judicious preacher will therefore so conduct himself as to remove the difficulties which these distinct kinds of texts impose upon his care. The mere exhibition of such a list of scriptures as that just now given will not effect the desired object, though the view itself is proper enough. The commands are not to be neutralised to mean nothing at all ; to use a vulgar expression, they are not to be set up to be knocked down again ; there must be some enquiry into the principles upon which they are established (twelfth Topic). We ought to consider the divine authority that the commands bear. This authority must never be lost sight of ; the gospel was never intended to abrogate, or diminish or suspend it : "If I be a master, where is my fear ? If I be father, where is my honour ?" Mal. i. 6. This fear or this honour is founded in his just authority. Allow me then to suggest that our subjection to the divine commands is our acknowledgment of this authority, and that every thing, whether found in the Old Testament or the New, that bears the character of authority or command, "is holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), and should be directed to its proper and legitimate effect, either to direct or convince. Antinomians (properly so called) here stand convicted. Every disposition to laxity of conduct here finds a suitable corrective.

There is also a principle cognizable in the divine commands which is of a most benign nature, and which most delightfully softens the before-mentioned considerations, and ought to attract our love to the commands. This principle has respect to the *reward* of the righteous, the reward of grace, a reward that the gospel opens to us, and which is peculiar to itself and quite distinct from the reward attached to the original law of our creation, or that of a perfect performance of the written law. This is the reward of obedience ; for every act at the final judgment, whether it be bad or good, is to "receive a just recompense of reward ;" and to this Moses had respect, Heb. xi. 26. The manner in which our blessed Saviour adverts to this subject, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, shows that it is the very principle of God's legislative justice, which, so far from contravening the freeness of redemption by Christ, does very wonderfully and graciously operate in unison with it. Here then we find one design of the commands in question : had there been no commands, there could not properly have been any obedience ; and, if no obedience, then no reward : therefore in such a case the righteous would have lost their crown, their honour, their distinction—the public testimony of their acts which the "God of all grace" will at the last day make manifest to all worlds. Thus the commands lay the foundation for a part of the joy of the righteous. Surely we have here some rich gems of great value, and we would not have one command, even the most trying to human nature, expunged from the divine word.

Again : God will bring forward these commands at the last day, and the acts of obedience to them, to stand as the most manifest proofs to all intelligent creatures of the justice of his sentence of life and blessedness ; and the presumptuous and impenitent disobeyers of those commands, who will then reap the fruit of their disobedience, will be compelled to acknowledge that their sentence is just.

Undoubtedly the commands are also designed to convince of sin in order to repentance, and to lead to humble prayer for recovering and helping grace, and for the exercise of faith in the promises of such grace. The texts

just quoted fall in with this last idea. For this purpose they were collected and arranged, and for this purpose I have transcribed them.

What I have submitted to you on the subject of the commands will, I hope, assist you properly to compare things together, according to the suggestion of our Topic, and to preach consistently and scripturally. To represent every subject clearly to the people is an important art, and must be attained, that we may not "darken counsel by words without knowledge." "We should," says Mr. Caryl, "labour to deliver our minds plainly concerning the mind of God, that what we utter may not tend to perplexity, but, as much as in us lies, a clearing of the word. As we profess to give light in dark cases, so we ought to act; and the prayerful student, while he looks habitually to the great Source of light and knowledge, will not only give the people the result of his own studies, but that also which he is taught of God, and which is infinitely preferable."

The next enquiry which our Topic suggests relates to the comparison of promises with the manner of their fulfilment. It is a very easy thing to jump over or pass by difficulties, and perhaps sometimes it is the safest way; but it is better, if possible, to obviate them, and so make the way somewhat smoother for followers. One of the difficulties which will present themselves on the subject before us is to reconcile promises apparently conditional, and affecting our salvation, with the unconditional and unchangeable purposes of God, which nothing can reverse; "for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." We are deeply concerned in both these important points. No doubt one is given for our caution, the other for our comfort; but when we consider the different course of their operations, and the different principles upon which they appear to turn, we seem to be presented with the view of the prophet, "*a wheel in the midst of a wheel*" (Ezek. i. 16.)—something complex to us, however true—a wheel within a wheel, one moving in a straight, the other in a transverse direction; and yet, in some way unknown to us, the double action is but one. The unconditional expressed purpose of Jehovah may perhaps be fitly represented by the principal wheel, always progressing, always fulfilling the divine designs in grace, which "wait not for man."

In this department of divine truth we hear such language as this: "I will work and none shall hinder." "Have I said, and shall I not do it?" "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The sins of the Jews did not, as it is pretended, prevent the advent of the Messiah; "but, when the fulness of time had come," the Saviour appeared. Herod could not murder him; the Jews' malice could not suppress his gracious acts and doctrines. Here we shall read with advantage the second Psalm, in connexion with references to it in Acts iv. 25—28: also Isa. xxviii. 16.

To the same account we place the promises respecting the work of the Spirit, as Joel ii. 28—32 and Zech. xii. 10, connected with the out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the mighty power of the word in its progress to evangelize the world. Here the co-operation of human agency can only be resolved into the purpose itself. The divine right to employ it, direct it, and prosper it, did not depend on the will of man, but on the power and authority of God.

Here every thing is very clear; but when in Ezekiel's vision we find the inner wheels giving as I should suppose a transverse motion, having a real but secret connexion with the principal wheel, representing perhaps that

economy of the divine government by which, while cause and effect in any individual action are secured, yet an agency is called forth, apparently permitted to will or not to will, to whom something is electively committed. In the first case the divine will takes the lead ; in this second a human agent seems to take the lead. If we do so and so, such a blessing will be bestowed ; as "draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you," James iv. 8. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find," Matt. vii. 7. "If any man open unto me, I will come in to him," Rev. iii. 20. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. Besides these there are hundreds more which we consider as conditional promises, or as declarations of what will necessarily fall out, as an effect follows a cause, and which any wise man would easily see must result from such and such conduct, as Rom. viii. 13. But still it is clear that any really conditional or regulated promise hangs upon something to be done by us, and we see that, wherever the regulation is observed, God is not slack concerning the fulfilment of his promises : for it is in all cases true that, if we draw nigh to God, he does draw nigh to us,—if we seek, we do find,—if we believe, we are saved,—if we come to Christ, he does receive us, and, if we refuse to come to him, we are not received. These are unquestionable facts. It is evident that we are dealt with here as rational and accountable creatures. Now, whether we see it or not, there is no doubt a connexion between the general purpose of God and the free agency of man. The general purpose may rationally consist with the disposing of men's minds to the due use of appointed means. The work of converting grace supposes such influence ; and our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling does not exclude God's working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure (Phil. ii. 12, 13) ; so that when, agreeably to our Topic, we compare the promises with the conditions annexed, we do it with great advantage to ourselves and shall be enabled to adjust a case of conscience upon it for the benefit of our hearers, seeing that this wheel in the midst of a wheel, having a transverse motion, does not offer any insuperable difficulty ; "for at last," as good Mr. Bayne* says, "the will is subject to grace, and not grace to the will." God is still free in the exercise of his sovereignty, in disposing the mind to himself when even in an act of rebellion, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus when intent on persecuting the saints of God.

Thus far, my brethren, I think you may proceed, that is, to justify the divine procedure, his just right to establish his own purposes, to carry them into execution against all opposition, to exact from man the concurrence of his will, to place him under responsibilities, to give encouragement to exertion, and to put means into his hands for this purpose which he has so much interest in improving. Thus far we have real and practical utility in comparing the state of things till we understand their bearings, till we apprehend what the mind or will of God is upon those points in which a well-regulated ministry is so much concerned, and in which the light of private

* The divine alluded to was Paul Bayne, of St. Andrew's College, Cambridge. His work on Ephesians is in some parts insufficient, in others very excellent, which observation, I think, will apply to divinity works in general of that age.

Christians is either diminished or promoted. We ought to give the people as much satisfaction as we can. But into deep speculations and disputations enter not. I never knew any good done by them. Human weakness is not to be trusted far into the intricacy and secret connexion between the principal and subordinate wheels of the divine administration. *Practical utility* is the point at which you are to aim and at which you are to stop. As often as necessary you will maintain the sovereignty of God, that he has a right in willing an end to will also the means, to arm those means with necessary efficacy, and to support them by his promises; and you will show that there is a perfect analogy with this divine method in the natural world, which indeed opens up another subject of comparison. Here God wills a crop, but wills also the needful culture and labour. God wills light to the world, but makes the heavenly bodies subservient to this end. Thus he wills our spiritual improvement, and all means in connexion with it. Nor can there be any thing more reasonable, or more honourable to us, than placing talents in our hands that we may increase them,—making us the agents of our own happiness,—accepting, in kindness, the co-operation of our poor endeavours with his purposes,—putting a number of regulated promises into the hands of those who are so deeply interested in their object,—putting us upon nothing less than self-preservation and self-interest,—honouring his creature with an active agency suited to a renewed state, an activity too so necessary to our spiritual health as well as our improvement,—putting us upon the exercise of our faith in the divine word, upon the expectancies of hope,—making us examples of success in the use of means,—giving us a blessed experience that the Lord is gracious, and a blessed foretaste of “the grace that we are to receive at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This view of things places our religion above the suspicion of fanaticism; and if these conditional promises had been withheld the loss would have been very great; there would have been no suitability between the economy under which we are placed and the common nature of man, but a strange anomaly exhibited to us, which all the wisdom of philosophy could never have reconciled nor accounted for. We have therefore much reason to be grateful that the economy of grace is so suited to our state, and to every thing that is remedial which that state requires.

Allow me, however, to show more at large that these conditional promises are actually and experimentally of a beneficial nature, and that their not standing as a part of the sacred scripture would be a very great calamity.

1. I observe, in the first place, that a Christian is necessarily influenced by hope and fear in spiritual things. He comes under these influences in a new manner in conversion; and, in proportion as he is actuated by them, his spiritual life is to be estimated as lively, or dull, or languishing. I do not say that these are the only motives to action, because love is equally essential; but it must be admitted that hope and fear are principal motives of determination as to man's conduct. The hope of reward influenced Moses's choice; and the apostle says, “Let us also fear, lest” such and such consequences follow. Now try the issue upon a single regulated promise of our dear Lord and Master: “Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find,” &c. Does not the promise actually and experimentally operate upon the believer's mind? Is he not influenced to pray by the very terms of the promise? and is he not put into a state of fear that if he do not so seek he

will not find or obtain that which is the matter of petition? Certainly we must answer in the affirmative. Here is a proof of the excellence and utility of a conditional promise, and, however dead his frame of mind may be, when he connects with this the promise of a spirit of grace and supplication—the assurance that the Spirit will help his infirmities, though “with groanings which cannot be uttered”—does he not resolve, “Thy face will I seek?”—“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning?” Now this is such a plain case of utility that no doubt remains.

2. The weakness of our common nature requires such stimuli, in all variety. Does the Saviour say, “Come unto me, and you shall find rest for your souls?” The believer answers, “I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God: in thee the destitute find mercy.” Take but a review of the promises of scripture, and you will perceive that all of them tend to action—the very essence of the Christian life—that they are adapted to all possible circumstances with an accuracy of foreknowledge that is very wonderful, implying an intimate acquaintance with our wants, which nothing but omniscience could discern or infinite goodness could supply; and yet there is not one promise too much.

Again: There are promises to our due observance of the Lord’s institutions, and of all other obligations rightly regarded. There are promises to encourage our trust and confidence in every season of affliction or sorrow. There are promises made to the exercise of every Christian grace, and they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Now suppose the absence of these, or their existence without the condition under which they are given; in either case the want must be severely felt, both by the private Christian and more especially by the preachers of the gospel, who could never, with all their ingenuity, furnish a substitute. In former times, more than at present, it was the practice of preachers to urge to activity from motives collected from heathen philosophers. This was indeed a miserable shift; but, if the funds of eloquence which these promises supply were wanted, we must go again to the school of Athens for topics of discourse, and we might say of the pulpit, “The glory has departed.” I hope it has been sufficiently shown that these promises have an important place in scripture, that they are in fact an invaluable treasury of comfort and instruction.

3. Does not the Christian stand in continual need of some evidence of his state before God, and especially in the dark and cloudy day? What better evidence can he have than that which arises from the agreement of his mind with the promises of God? This is not the case with a hypocrite; he wants the promises, but wants them without that state of the heart to which the promises have respect. The believer can, on the contrary, appeal to God for his sincerity that he desires the promises only in God’s own way, and believes that God will work in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure: and this, I say, is an enviable estate: his will, which God first looks at, is always present to promote the purposes of grace according to grace received; the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God. Our business therefore is to compare the promises with the requirements annexed to them; and though we may find an apparent dissimilarity of principles, such as has been stated, yet we shall not be led to any unfavourable result, for we are here under sovereign protection. God himself has made these two principles one, and what he has joined together let no man put asunder. Privilege and obligation united

will be offensive only to a distempered or perverted mind ; and, when we compare the one with the other, we shall see their fitness and propriety,—we shall see the wisdom and goodness of God in placing them thus before us,—we shall endeavour to carry on the design by giving our people the utmost satisfaction in our power as to their expediency, utility, and beauty,—we shall endeavour to prevent them from any misunderstanding which might be conceived upon the point,—we shall not allow it to be thought that there is any merit in meeting the regulation or acquirement, for in fact God's own grace confers the qualification as well as the benefit,—we shall not allow any to be discouraged from an apprehension of their inability to meet the requirement, since the humble are under a special protection,—we shall hold a just balance, give the full weight of all the consolations to be derived from the unchangeable love of God (Rom. viii. 39), and all needful caution, that none may presume without a fair and scriptural ground.

Though not entering into the original intention of our Topic, I offer no apology for directing your minds to a branch of the comparison which appears to me of great utility, viz., *comparing the works of God with the word of God*. This will lead us to examine whether our faith can really be benefited, and we made more efficient ministers of the gospel, by such comparison. Is there any such connexion between the natural and moral or spiritual world as to lead to the inference that they are counterparts of each other, formed with the design of carrying into effect one great and worthy end, which separately could not be so well effected ? Or shall we find that these two economies are really so distinct as to be without any manner of connexion whatever ? The apparent similarities which invite our enquiry, and which are very striking, must be the effect either of design or of what is called accident. The former appears to me the more rational conclusion. The resemblances were, it is presumed, designed for some great end, and that end must be the instruction of man.

Objections to this view of the subject have arisen. Sensitive Christians, zealous for the honour of scripture literally translated or understood, have placed themselves against it ; they are afraid of committing themselves to what they conceive an unsafe theory, as they are in another case to affix a spiritual sense to any historical or ceremonial passage, lest they should fall into the rank of enthusiasts. There are others who think that the word of God is the only source of instruction to mankind, and who are timorous of looking into the volume of nature, because infidels derive their religion (if such it can be called) from this source, and because some persons of a visionary turn of mind have brought the study into some discredit. I cannot however think a sentiment unsafe that is warranted by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and which has been viewed in its just light by such men as Bishops Horne, Butler, and Horsley, to which I add the late Mr. Romaine, Parkinson, Jones of Nayland, and many others—men who have been esteemed among the brightest ornaments of the church. I do not doubt the sufficiency of scripture ; but I beg leave to say that the volume of nature is recognised in scripture much more broadly and extensively than many other things which we generally receive. I am not inclined to abandon a system or sentiment because it has been abused, since such abuse could only arise out of an acknowledgment of its truth, and out of the same kind of zeal which has brought religion itself into some discredit. I am not therefore inclined to abandon the works of God as a source of divine instruction be-

cause infidels establish, or pretend to establish, their opinions upon them. These characters are not destitute of intelligence; and, whatever be their sin, they admit that the finger of God is visible throughout universal nature, and that instruction is to be derived from what they hear, see, and feel. But this is their sin, they aim a deadly blow at revelation, through a vain pretence of the sufficiency of natural religion. We admit their premises, that nature is instructive; but we deny their conclusion, that revelation is unnecessary. I am sorry to observe that there is a disposition in man to lower the divine designs, which we are told are as much "higher than our thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth;" and again, that "God's thoughts are very deep." But why should it be thought a thing incredible to us that God should so have constructed the visible things of his natural creation as to render them an image of his moral government in many material points? in how many we cannot tell. Do we not frequently find combinations where at first we saw but a simple act? Is this one of the most mysterious things imaginable? Or rather is it not so plain that "he that runs may read?" Is not the greater part of the figurative language of scripture built upon resemblances to nature? and, if we admit the metaphors we must admit the connexion.

It seems to me a littleness of mind to suppose that the coincidences observable between the volume of nature and that of inspiration originated in mere accident, like the famous "fortuitous concourse of atoms which tumbled together and produced this world," but how nobody could tell! As we believe that this frame of nature was contrived in all its parts to answer many and different purposes, by a sagacity that is infinite, so I presume we may believe that among other combinations the natural world was so ordered at the first as to provide materials of instruction to man. Hence we find in scripture such pointed references from one to the other as the following:—"As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. lv. 10, 11. "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," Isa. lxi. 11. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel knoweth not me, my people do not consider," Isa. i. 3. "All creatures," says Caryl, in his admirable commentary on Job, "have a teaching voice, and read us divinity lectures of divine Providence. There are four things which the creatures teach us: they teach us that there is a God, and much concerning him: 'Even the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. i. 20. The creatures teach us ready obedience to the will of God, in that all creatures obey the law of their creation: 'Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy winds and tempests, fulfil his word,' Ps. cxlviii. 8. They teach us dependence upon God. Things without life are exhibited as putting forth acts of faith: 'The earth cries to the heavens; and the corn, and the wine, and the oil, cry to the earth,' Hos. ii. 21. The whole creation teaches that there is something further provided for us than what we now enjoy. The earnest expectation

of the creature waiteth for further manifestations, Rom. viii. 19. 'Ask,' says Job, 'the beasts, and they will tell thee.' So many creatures, so many teachers. The ox teaches to know our bountiful Lord. The ant preaches industry to man. We are again excited to look to the feathered creation for instruction. The fowls of the heaven seek their meat from God: 'The stork knoweth her appointed times; the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgments of the Lord,' Jer. viii. 7."

"The heathen indeed," as Mr. Jones of Nayland has observed, "regarded the world as a parable, the literal or bodily part of which is manifest to all men, while the hidden meaning is known only to the wise; that is, the moral in the fable, or the interpretation of the parable, was above vulgar apprehensions." Now that which was a mystery to the heathen is none to the Christian with the Bible in his hand; the secret is opened by scripture, and the connexion of things is clearly unfolded. Whoever therefore sees this connexion with an unprejudiced mind will be in the way to understand the scriptures better than he could by the scriptures alone.

There are, moreover, peculiar circumstances which constitute the material world a fit source of instruction. For instance, the universality of its lessons. Infidels say that our revelation meets the ear of only a small part of the world, but that if it were from heaven it would be universal. Time and means must effect a refutation of this objection, such as God will eventually provide; but against the works of nature no such argument can be advanced, for they are of universal application, and every human being that has eyes and ears, with any share of observation and reflection, has the benefit here of an instructor. That men in heathen countries are not better instructed than they are is owing to the same cause which leaves men in a state of ignorance in England—a wicked and untractable nature. The works of God have a language every where intelligible. "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," Ps. xix. "To saint, to savage, and to sage," God speaks in his works; and by the productions of the earth, or by the elements surrounding them, he excites to fear and to hope, and that in many instances with a voice which the noise of their idolatries cannot overpower and which the delusions of their priests cannot silence; and, when this language of nature strikes in with that innate consciousness which possesses every human heart, this universal teaching may, in very many instances, be to a certain degree salutary. This is a proof of God's universal benevolence, and that to such a degree as, St. Paul says, will leave the heathen "without excuse."

As the material creation was admirably fitted, by its universality, to teach all nations, so it had this further adaptation, that it was ever unchangeable in its general character. So steady have been the operation of the laws of nature that Stoics have considered every thing as proceeding in one regular course by an inevitable necessity, and infidels of modern date have claimed this as an argument against scripture miracles, the fallacy of which, however, Dr. Campbell has very ably exposed; yet these testimonies, added to historical records and our own observation, establish the point that nature is always the same (miracles excepted), and is therefore a steady instructor. As the "word of God abideth for ever," as God in all his glorious attributes and perfections, in his determinations and counsels, changes not, so nature, throughout her works, is the same in the thousands of years

that are past, and shall remain the same till time shall end. Though kingdoms rise and fall, though some stars, as astronomers tell us, lose their places, though the sentiments of men may undergo a thousand revolutions, yet the material creation, and its endless objects of instruction, are always the same, and the references to natural things that are made for our benefit in the scriptures lose nothing of their pristine authority by the lapse of thousands of years. These references, whether made by David or the prophets, or our blessed Lord himself, are now as well understood as they were at first ; while the changes which have taken place in the manners of nations have been so great that at the present time we can ill understand the history of antiquity. The unchangeable nature, therefore, of the visible objects that afford instruction particularly fits them for their office. It is this by which they stand recommended to us even upon the very same ground as the immutability of the written word.

The works of nature are not only adapted to the purpose of instruction by their universality, and by their unchangeable nature, but also by their adaptation to the lowest capacities of men. A mathematical demonstration is a demonstration only to a mathematician, and a learned demonstration requires the learning of the learned to perceive its force. Greek can be understood by a Grecian, sublime things may be comprehended by elevated minds, and deep mysteries and doctrines may be quite intelligible to divines and their polite hearers. In all these cases, however, the multitude are left out. But the works of God, like all the essentials of scripture, are of a character adapted to the capacities of the many ; and I am convinced, by this coincidence, that both are from God, who has as much regard to the poor, to the multitude, the great mass of mankind, as to the learned and the wise ; and when I consider that the lessons of nature and those of the divine scripture, with the teachings of the Holy Spirit superadded, all teach the same thing, speak the same language to man's heart, and point man to the same objects, to be pursued by the same course, I am constrained to exclaim, This is the finger of God ! Such coincidences could never have happened but that an intelligent, wise, and good Being, having in view the instruction of ignorant, erring, lost man, ordered these things in his unerring counsels ; and whatever regard God had to his own glory—which must ever be the first object—yet has he been mindful of us.

This representation of things may not, however, fully satisfy those who plead for the exclusive sufficiency of the written word, without the aid of nature. There is something highly commendable in a zeal for the sufficiency of the scriptures in an age like this, when scripture is depreciated, if not in plain words, yet by implication ; and I am sensible that these scriptures are able to make a man wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished to all good works. But this, with our believing and beloved friends, is not the present point, which alone is, whether or not the natural things of creation continue to afford materials of instruction to man. The opinion that the instructions of nature are no longer required appears to be founded upon a notion like this, that the morning-star is now no longer necessary since the great light of heaven shines upon us, or that some sort of supersedeas has issued to stay the proceedings of all natural religion, or, as some people say, as the law of Moses is abrogated by the hope of the gospel, so is the law of nature. Now this is a very short way of escaping all enquiry ; but I submit that whatever was once thought necessary to the instruction

of man remains still, and will ever remain, necessary in some degree, and more especially to some part of mankind, while the world continues. True religion is always the same under every economy, and the avenues to it are the good old paths. That its paths may be made plainer, and that more light may be shed on them by succeeding times, I am ready to admit; but that one path is stopped up by hedge or ditch since the creation of the world I must beg leave to deny. This, however, will appear more clearly by considering what the most ancient religion was, what it appeared to be in different subsequent dates, and what it is at the present day.

Defaced as the image of God was by the fall, yet man remained a reasonable and conscious being, and consequently an accountable agent. The visible creation was before the eye of man. He could not but make reflections upon what he saw. Nature was not so corrupt but man must believe and acknowledge the divine nature and existence, since it must be intuitively evident to a rational being that no creature could make itself. The broad lines of excellency every where seen must impress his mind with some notion of the divine wisdom; for this is the unavoidable inference from the view presented to him. It must appear right to him—his reason and conscience must dictate—that this divine Being deserved suitable affections from him, and that the want of such affections must be a great fault; and he must feel within him a moral sense of right and wrong with respect to his Maker. He must observe how admirably every thing above his head, and every thing here below, did silently obey its Maker. He must also feel his situation in respect to his fellow-creatures to be such that some relative law required observance, and could not be disobeyed with impunity, as in the cases of Cain and Lamech; and, besides mere obligation, that his fellow-creature was entitled to his love and affection: for it is only by progressive degradations that this principle can be extinguished. Both in respect to his Maker and his fellow-creatures, it was plain to him that God had commenced his legislative authority, by the inward feelings of conscience as well as by outward demonstrations; it was plain that God in his providence, in his sovereign direction of cause and effect, did actually make a difference between the righteous and the wicked (Gen. iv. 7), and that this legislation would proceed beyond the bounds of the present life.

In this stage of civil society, or individual existence, it must have been evident, on inspection of the heavenly bodies, and of the bounteous earth, the clouds of rain, and springs of water, that God was supremely good: nay, further, by the beauty and variety of many created things, such as met and delighted the senses, it must have been evident that God was indulgent also. The rich clothing of the earth by day,—the beauty of the bespangled heavens at night,—the rising and setting sun, scattering infinite varieties of colours and forms over the light clouds that seem to delight in receiving these impressions,—the fanning breeze and the shady groves, all combine to gratify and delight the beholder; while delicious fruits gave taste its pleasure, and the ear was delighted by concords of sweet sounds. *Æolian* melody so ravished the ear of Jubal that he invented the harp and the organ, instruments to produce those sounds at will. Whether or not Jubal's lyre or harp, and organ, were first dedicated to God, does not appear from history; but it is extremely probable that they were tuned to the expressions of gratitude and praise to him.

That the wickedness of man may do all kinds of violence to this natural

religion is awfully true ; but it must be acknowledged that this equally holds good as to any other form of religion. Man may degenerate into a form worse than brutish : but still I contend that every part of my representation is such as might have existed : and that it was such as the Sovereign Ruler of the world did look for is most certain ; for the condemnation of the flood was not inflicted because those antediluvians refused Moses or Christ, but because “every thought and imagination of man’s heart was evil, only evil, and that continually.” Man’s wickedness was perpetrated in the midst of the light of nature that surrounded him, and his transgressions had this mark of infamy upon them.

But, it may be asked, had man no other light in the antediluvian ages than what nature unfolded ? Yes, certainly. The early institution of sacrifices was a species of instruction which applied itself in a way of comfort to that sense of guilt which every man acquainted with himself must feel. He was here taught that God might be propitiated, that there was forgiveness with him that he might be feared, and that God’s character was mercy, or else these sacrifices were appointed in vain. As to what was peculiar to those sacrifices, and in what they might at some future period terminate, he might be involved in much obscurity (though faith might penetrate this gloom, as in the case of Abel, Heb. xi. 4) ; yet here was substantively the first light of the gospel. The first institution of the sabbath was given to these ages : and holy men of God, Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah, were patterns of the true religion, and such patterns in their “walk with God” as it were well if we in the nineteenth century of the Christian era could closely follow. Enoch and Noah were preachers of righteousness, and their holy example was a sweet savour to God and men : and this was not without effect ; for a church was formed, and its members were distinguished as the “sons of God.” So that “God did not leave himself without a witness” in this remotest period of his legislative sovereignty.

Nay, I contend that there has not been, cannot be, any change in that which constituted then the essence of true religion, or only a change of blessed improvement, as the earliest dawn of the morning is improved by the advance of day, while the light itself as to its nature is materially the same. The first elements of religion were wisely contrived for such a creature as man actually is, and while man is man he must continue to be dealt with in a manner precisely the same.*

The amount of what has been stated is this, that man was created a religious being, that in the Fall this character was not absolutely and entirely changed, that God left with man the volume of universal nature to read for his instruction, and that he graciously superadded such revelations as were

* “The nature of man being the same now as from the beginning of the world, and the nature of God being unchangeable, it must follow that the great objects of the dispensations of God to man must be the same in every age, though the form and the manner after which that object is pursued may be different. So that ‘what God spoke in former times to the fathers by the prophets’ will be found the same, in sense and effect, with what he ‘spoke in the last days by his Son,’ though he spoke ‘in divers manners’ as occasions might require, ‘at sundry times ;’ and this is a matter of the preached utmost consequence to be observed : hence Paul spoke of the gospel being in the wilderness, as well as after our Lord’s advent and ascension. The law and the gospel have the same name, and are distinguished by the same character. So that the religion of the people of God was the same for substance under the Old as under the New Testament : we find one true religion from the beginning of the world to its end.”—*Jones of Nayland.*

necessary to instruct him in those things which nature alone could not lead him to comprehend.

Religion after the flood would necessarily be the same as before it occurred. It certainly acquired new sanctions by the awful visitation of an almost universal destruction. Noah had witnessed a populated and a destroyed world—a world, once beautiful, utterly transformed and wasted. The solemnity of that scene, and his miraculous escape, were well calculated to prepare his mind for that sacrifice which was his first act after he descended from the ark. We see in him the grand patriarch of the new world, its only ruler, its first priest, its “preacher of righteousness.” Faithful to his charge, he did not meditate a new theology, though his unworthy posterity did so; like Paul, that which he received, that he handed over to his sons and successors. That he did not innovate in religion is presumptively evident: for, if such had been the fact, the pen of Moses would diligently have noted it.

Proceeding further, we find that Abram, without any special command or any notion of his own, “built altars to the Lord” in the manner of Noah. In both cases, and in succeeding ages, the true religion survived the convulsions of nature. The earth though transformed, resumed its vegetative powers. The animal tribes passed into their kinds and species to accompany a re-peopled world, capable, with the unchanging heavens, of leading man “from nature up to nature’s God.” Every assistance in the way of instruction to man remained; and, had not the deep rooted depravity of man corrupted this religion, idolatry and all its hideous concomitants would not so soon have overspread the earth. Had the example of Noah, of Abraham, and of his family, been followed, the generation of those ages, as they spread themselves over the earth, would have spread the knowledge of the true God; and, with the resurrection of the vegetable kingdom after the flood, “righteousness also might have sprung out of the earth.” To that time, I say, no novelty in religion obtained; and, though degeneracy was so rapid, yet we have undoubted evidence that the voice of nature could still be heard, that consciousness of right and wrong could not be lost, that in every succeeding age an acknowledgment was made of the existence of a supreme Being above all vanities of the Gentiles.

If a time had ever arrived for the introduction of a new religion, what period so favourable as that of Moses, to whom “God spoke face to face, and mouth to mouth.” But, while we admit that the economy of the Mosaic law was very great and important, yet we ask of what did it consist? The determination of Jehovah to form a people for himself, a clear exposition of the law of creation, a complete ritual respecting those sacrifices which the patriarchs had somewhat irregularly observed, a clearer discovery of the Messiah, to whom all sacrifices and types pointed—in short a ritual that answered the end of the gospel, and pointed to the Lamb of God that should come into the world. Here was indeed a new light, but no new religion. The religion of nature was to continue, but with special cautions against certain abuses. The Israelites were admonished to remember that when they saw the sun, the moon, and stars, these were not to be worshipped, when they looked to the wisest among the creatures they were not to make from them any likeness of the Deity. Now these very interdictions show the existence of a natural religion, and are an acknowledgment of its being; while they intimate the fatal proneness of fallen man to substitute the creature in place of the Creator.

From this time and throughout the prophetic ages, when instruction to man assumed a regular form, and was enriched with promises and prophecies of future good, the language in which those instructions were conveyed was in a great degree derived from the natural world as well as from the written law, from which it appears that the natural world could not then be dispensed with as an instructor.

Passing on to the opening of the gospel dispensation, do we here find any diminution of references to the volume of nature? The conduct of our blessed Lord himself fully answers this question. He gave his sanction to the method of instruction which his prophets in every age had used so successfully. He laid every object of nature under contribution, and from things natural led his disciples to things spiritual. He compared himself to the sun, the light of the world; his word of truth to seed cast into the earth, the resurrection of the seed to the appearance of grace in the heart; heavenly wisdom to the pearl of great price, &c. His parables were made up of such resemblances, and without a parable he spoke not unto the people.

In the apostolic epistles allusions are more generally made to the language of the law and the prophets, and references to nature occur less frequently, though sufficient still to show that there was no abandonment of the system. This continuance of the language of nature and that of the law in the New Testament is an evident proof that neither the one nor the other had become useless. The law did not abrogate the religion of nature, nor did the gospel abrogate either the one or the other, but shed a new and glorious light upon both. As Dr. Jortin has observed, "Nature instructs us in all her parts. Every creature conveys some useful doctrine. We may learn constancy from the sun, moon, and stars, which keep their appointed course. We may learn honesty and gratitude from the earth, which faithfully preserves what is committed to her care, and repays our labour with interest. We may learn industry from the animals who provide against hunger, change of seasons, and the assaults of enemies. We may learn obedience and obligation from the domestic creatures who love their master, and serve him in their respective character."*

The gospel of Christ is the very highest illustration of divine benevolence; and all the pains we can take to render it familiar to the understandings of the ignorant, by comparisons drawn from such objects as come within the cognizance of the senses, will not be considered unnecessary. In order therefore to lead you into this study, I shall here add a few brief illustrations, which may serve to show *how* the works of God may be compared with the word of God. I begin with,

1. The image of *light*.† Light is that fine and subtle matter, universally diffused, that strikes our eyes. The natural sun is the source of this light; it was the first perfect visible creature. "God said, Let there be light," Gen. i. 3. It discovers all the beauty of the world, quickens the motions of nature, and is commonly made the emblem of joy, as darkness is the emblem of sorrow. What would the world be without this blessing? We cannot conceive of the loss of it by the case of a person that is blind, because the blind receive great benefit from the eyes of others. The best image of darkness, the opposite of the blessing we are speaking of, is seen in the state of the Egyptians, who were three days without the sun, Exod. x. 21—23. Darkness is emphatically employed to represent what is gloomy and appal-

* Jortin's Sermon on Luke xvi. 8.

† Vide Dr. Hunter on Light.

ling; and what can be more natural than to compare the light of day with that spiritual knowledge of which Christ himself is the source? John viii.

12. The apostle does so compare them, 2 Cor. iv. 6: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The allusions of scripture to this point are very numerous; and, in your speaking to the people, what an easy opening is this to the nature of the gospel! how often will this give an illustration that cannot be misunderstood!

2. Compare the church of God to the *moon*, &c. Her light is borrowed, imperfect, variable, inconstant, spotted with corruptions. From Jesus the church receives all her light of inspiration, ordinances, and grace. Amidst various changes of outward circumstances, amidst numberless spots of imperfections, she, during the night of time, communicates the light of life to our darkened earth. The righteous also shall shine as stars for ever and ever. Ministers are compared to stars, Rev. i. 20. Christians are styled children of light, and required to hold forth their light to the world, as stars do.

3. The *air* is that thin, dilatable, and compressible body in which we breathe, and which surrounds the earth to a great height. We could not live a moment without air: the action of the lungs administers it to the body, and, as a means, it is by this we "live, and move, and have our being." That the air may be preserved in a proper state to support life it is not stagnant, but is put in motion by the wind, which in fact is nothing else but air in motion: but what propels it forward, or pushes it in this or that direction no philosopher can tell; such is its mystery that it mocks the wise man of the world as it passes by him, John iii. 8. This element, like light, is an admirable means of instruction, no doubt ordained to a spiritual as well as a natural use. Neither of these can be supposed accidental resemblances. "In the air," says Mr. Jones, "we have a figure of the Holy Spirit, which worketh imperceptibly as it listeth, while we cannot tell 'whence it cometh and whither it goeth.' As air is necessary to natural life, so the operations of the divine Spirit are necessary to the spiritual life. As the air gives the breath of speech, so the Holy Ghost gives the utterance of the inspiration, as on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came upon the disciples like a rushing mighty wind," &c.

4. *Water* and *fire* are equally to be found comparable to spiritual objects; both are applied as emblems of purification, and water is also employed to signify that which refreshes and comforts. Divine grace is emphatically called "living water," as that water which is taken from a spring, because it brings with it new life and spirit, which it has derived from the subterraneous chemistry of nature, and which is always found to contain a large quantity of air. The application of water to wash and purify the body is used to signify the inward cleansing of the soul from sin by the washing of regeneration; and all the purifications by water under the law had a similar meaning, as applied in those words of the prophet, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This new heart and new spirit, as the work of God's grace, was always signified by every act of religious purification, according to that of the psalmist, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me."

5. The *earth*, that solid mass of matter which has in itself the necessary powers of vegetation, is by our Lord likened to the heart, the good ground which brings some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. The renewed soul, so to speak, has its vegetative qualities, and brings forth fruit unto God ; while it has its contrast in the wicked, unrenewed heart, which brings forth briers, thorns, thistles, &c., only fit to be burned.

6. Next to these the *clouds* of the lower heavens, the *rain* and *dew*, all have their likenesses in the benign kingdom of grace, and, as well as some other products of the air, are as clearly referred to in scripture as such.

7. To inspire holy fear, thunders, lightnings, storms, and tempests, are images of divine anger, and are admirably adapted to a popular discourse.

8. The various products of the earth—as woods, trees, shrubs, corn, seeds, flowers—have spiritual resemblances assigned them in scripture.

9. So also the various tribes of birds and animals—some bearing resemblances to the saints, some to the wicked—and that of various kinds ; to which may be added the reptile class—and here we have reason to remember the serpent. There are also the flying and crawling insects, and the tenants of the watery element, most of which receive notice of one kind or another in God's book.

10. The human body is compared to the church of Christ (1 Cor. xii.), and distinct parts of the body represent spiritual acts. Man's food, of various sorts, is spiritualized, and also the liquid elements that contribute to his sustenance,—his various movements, actions, and motions,—the faculties of the senses, appetites, and passions,—his habits, his occupations, his constitutional state as to health and sickness, his enjoyments and his diseases, every thing that happens to him from his birth to his grave,—his times and seasons, his relationships and dependences, his civil, his political, his religious, his commercial, his social character, as an inhabitant of earth and as an expectant of heaven—admit of comparisons as entertaining as they are instructive.

11. It has been said that even doctrines of the highest class might be learnt from visible nature. Allow me to add that man's eating of the *flesh of animals*, to which we are so reconciled that we scarcely give it a thought, exposes to our view the similitudes of "the derivation of a principle of spiritual life by the death of Christ, and the remission of sin by the shedding of his innocent blood, which are doctrines essential to the gospel, and every way agreeable to the condition of man's natural life ; for we live by the death of innocent animals, which are compelled, without any fault of their own, to lay down their lives for our sustenance. Thus thoughtless men observe a practice without understanding it, as Caiaphas prophesied without knowing what he said : 'It is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not,' John xi. 50. It is expedient that the innocent should die to feed our bodies—let any man deny it if he can ; and it is equally expedient that Jesus Christ should die to feed our souls. The animals before referred to are no doubt doomed to die by the wise appointment of God ; as Jesus Christ the righteous, with the meekness and innocency of the lamb, was brought to the slaughter, that through his death we might have eternal life." *

Here I am led to advert to that light which nature sheds on the doctrine of the resurrection. Some animals, after a torpid state scarcely distinguishable from death, recover the power of life at the proper season by the in-

* Jones, p. 334—336.

fluence of the sun, some after submersion in water during the whole winter. Some crawl for a time as helpless worms upon the earth, like ourselves; then they retire into a covering, which answers the end of a coffin or a sepulchre, where they are invisibly transformed, and come forth in the proper season in glorious array, with wings and painted plumes, more like the inhabitants of heaven than such worms as they were. This transformation is so striking and pleasant an emblem of the present, the intermediate, and the glorified state of man, that people of the most remote antiquity, when they buried their dead, embalmed and enclosed them in an artificial covering, so figured and painted as to resemble the caterpillar or silk-worm in the intermediate state. And, when renovation is to be insisted on from the works of nature, we can refer safely to St. Paul's critical observations on a grain of wheat (1 Cor. xv.), which seems to perish, but which in due season springs up to life. Do not these things contain matters that may well throw light on the glorious doctrine of the resurrection? and surely God, who made man at the first of the dust of the earth, can form him afresh from the same material.

The objects of comparison thus briefly set before you may be sufficient to give impulse to your thoughts, and to excite you to pursue the subject, not as philosophers but as divines; and I recommend you to cherish this study for the enlargement of your own minds in the knowledge of nature and the word of God. In the course of your study ideas may present themselves in two ways: by beginning with the works of nature, and then rising to the spiritual and scriptural objects which they may illustrate; or commencing with any scriptural allusion to the objects of nature in the course of your reading, and then descending to the thing pointed out.

Leaving it undetermined how far the ancient world were able to derive spiritual ideas from natural things, yet, now that the key is presented to us by the scriptures, we should surely be unpardonable if we did not avail ourselves of it; and to what extent this Topic may with propriety be pursued it is impossible to say. In general it may be observed that the whole volume of nature is available, and that by the several particular objects presented to our notice an easy ascent is afforded

“ From nature up to nature's God,”

and to the several truths he desires us to know, and wherein we shall find part and counterpart more aptly indented than is generally supposed.

While however the book of nature lies open before you, and invites your attention, the word of God must be the chief object of your study; and it will be of great advantage to collect all the natural objects presented under different aspects in the scriptures, and to form a little system for yourself: indeed this would be worthy of some able pen.

In closing my remarks on this Topic, allow me to observe that the act of comparing one thing with another is of considerable importance in every branch of study; by this means truth is elicited, and by this means also is truth elucidated. When about to compose any discourse, you must first examine carefully and diligently what your text contains, independently of all human helps; though after this operation you may take the benefit of such assistance as you possess. After you have ascertained and collected the principle ideas, “the seeds of things,” but before you have formed your divisions, submit your work, thus far done, to comparison. Compare your

ideas with the context, with parallel passages, with the analogy of faith, &c. By these comparisons you will discover whether your thoughts are deficient, or unsuitable, or redundant, and especially whether you have started any eccentric idea, such as would expose you to animadversion; for I think young speakers are somewhat liable by a sanguine turn of mind to commit mistakes here. You will then compare such ideas as are to stand for the discourse one with another. By this comparison of the ideas among themselves you will see into what different classes they may be arranged: and, having thus fixed upon your general divisions, you will proceed again to compare these selected ideas among themselves in order to place them to advantage in subdivisions. When you have thus far assorted and arranged your ideas, you will recur to the chief point you had in view in fixing on your text, and endeavour to bring all your thoughts to bear upon this principle point. These rules, with a sound and vigorous judgment, will enable you to produce a truly original sermon, suited to those extraordinary occasions which will sometimes occur, for I have no idea of *every* sermon being thus laboured: a preacher's time may be much better employed.*

We may further observe that comparing things assimilates to reasoning upon things; and, though we are occupied in the study and diffusion of revelation, yet with reason we have something to do, or how can "we put to proof the things that differ?"† How compare a false position with a true one that directs itself against it? St. Paul says, "Judge you what I say," by which he intimates that what he had been stating was reasonable, or it could not have been referred to the decision of a sound understanding. Again: Paul before Felix "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come:" and so forcible and convincing was his reasoning that the tyrant, whose frown was sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of his subjects, now trembled under an appalling consciousness of guilt. It is true that human reasoning is capable of perversion, and sometimes makes "the worse appear the better cause," at least to carnal minds, who greedily adopt the sophistries of those who lie in wait to deceive. While, however, reasoning is abused by many, and feared by a few who have perceived that abuse and the mischief it has done, still it has its uses and rules, which are not to be neglected or shunned by a preacher of the gospel. "When the gospel gains admittance into the human mind, it is far from superseding the use of the reasoning faculty; but rather, by enlarging the bounds of the Christian's knowledge, provides it with a new province, wherein it may exercise itself with greater certainty and delight. It affirms in the strongest manner all the declarations of God, all the reason of duty naturally imprinted on his conscience; and adds to them what was entirely wanting before—a divine 'reason of hope.' The strictest reasoner can have no valid objection against the gospel, unless he *will* quarrel with it: it provides a sinner with a source of comfort, without the aid of his reasoning faculties, where all his natural funds for reasoning proved utterly insufficient."‡

Not so finely expressed, but closer to the point, is Mr. Caryl: "Reason is that ground or soil, which, being tilled and dressed, manured and well wrought upon, brings forth those excellent fruits of wisdom which ennoble the mind of man."

* See essay on Extemporaneous Preaching in the Appendix.

† See Dr. A. Clarke and Macknight on Phil. i. 10.

‡ Jones's Bib. Cyclo., vol. ii.

The several gradations or links of intellect discernable between the idiot and the wisest man in the world will be seen in the powers and exercises of reason as they are respectively possessed and used. Reason shows us the superiority in some respects of the wisdom of worldlings over the children of light. The comparison and the reasoning following upon it are thus stated by Jortin :—

“The children of this world have continual regard to the end they pursue. They never lose sight of it, let it be wealth, or power, or honour, or pleasure. It is their constant object ; it fills their earliest and latest thoughts ; it rises and lies down with them ; it goes out and returns home with them. But God’s children are seldom so intent on their great concerns. Sometimes they forget it, sometimes do things contrary to it ; often they are busy in affairs that have no relation to it. They are rather good by fits and starts, than with uniform and consistent perseverance.

“The children of this world are wise in choosing proper means to obtain their end. If they happen to be insufficient they change them, choose others, and—like the diligent spider whose net is broken—begin the work again. Christians are seldom equally judicious. They sometimes trust to deceitful hopes, adopt imperfect expedients, rely too much on zeal for opinions.

“The children of this world are diligent in their pursuits ; seldom is a Christian so assiduous in attending on the means of grace.

“The children of this world are constant and resolute ; they are not dejected by difficulty, discouraged by refusal, tired by labour, seduced by flattery, prevailed on by importunity, bribed by reward, persuaded by eloquence, daunted by threats, put out of countenance by ridicule, nor overborne by clamour, to abandon their pursuits. But the good are in danger of being overpowered by every discouragement, every stratagem, every obstacle, that works on their hopes or fears, or their inclination.”*

LECTURE XXII.

TOPIC XVII.

REMARK THE DIFFERENCES OF WORDS AND ACTIONS ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS.

WHATEVER falls under the idea of *similarity*, whether in a more general or more minute degree, belongs to the Topic which formed the subject of the foregoing Lecture. We now turn to the consideration of *dissimilarities* ; and, as we are required to *compare* one part of scripture with another in order to discover such dissimilarities, much that is said on the subject of comparison generally will apply to the present Topic. It will not therefore be necessary to extend our present remarks to any great length. The specific province of the Topic, as appears from its title, is the elucidation of discrepancies by a reference to the different occasions and circumstances, which do actually govern and compel different words and actions, and of which, therefore, it is both our duty and wisdom to take due notice.

Differences certainly do appear ; what is the reason ? Because there is a difference of occasions and circumstances. The right way of noticing these differences themselves is to begin with the first in order, and to proceed to the last, and then show that some new occasion or circumstance has created a necessary difference. Mr. Robinson observes, in reference to this Topic, “Seeming differences in scripture are reconciled by showing that on different occasions it was proper to say and unsay, to allow and disallow, to establish an economy and to dissolve it. The prophet Samuel reasoned with

* Jortin’s Sermon on Luke xvi. 8.

the Jews on this principle concerning the righteous acts of the Lord to them and their fathers : 1 Sam. xii. 6—15. According to him kings, priests, prophets, ordinances, establishments, captivities, all were appointed for the producing of moral rectitude or obedience ; and for the production of this, different treatments were necessary on different occasions." There is a change of administration, but not of purpose. Jehovah commanded a certain course of daily sacrifices to be offered under the law ; yet by his prophets he declares his abhorrence of them because abused and perverted from their proper end. God prohibited all except the priests from eating the shewbread, and yet permitted David and his followers to eat it under particular circumstances. The brazen serpent was to be preserved as a memorial in the holy place, and yet for good reasons Hezekiah in God's behalf broke it in pieces. Circumcision was strictly enjoined ; yet in the wilderness for forty years it was dispensed with. None were by the law allowed to eat of the sacrifices without the ceremony of purification ; but, under the existing circumstances in the time of king Hezekiah, this ceremonial cleansing was not enforced, 2 Chron. xxx. 18.

Again : "The Bible contains a record of the laws by which God's kingdom has been governed under various circumstances. In the patriarchal state one code of laws was necessary, under the Mosaic dispensation another, and afterwards under the gospel a third, differing circumstantially from both the former ;" and it would seem, from the language of prophecy, that a fourth state of the church is yet to come, in which there will be such an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit as to supersede the ordinary ministration of the gospel : "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest," Jer. xxxi. 34.

If we pass from the Old to the New Testament, we shall meet with similar diversities. Christ revokes some Old Testament records (Matt. v.) and adds new weight and importance to moral precepts. Our Lord's speech to his disciples also differed materially at different times, the reason of which will be found in the declaration that he uttered things "as they were able to bear them." On one occasion he restricts the publication of the gospel "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and cautions his disciples "not to enter into any city of the Samaritans ;" on another he commands them to carry the gospel of salvation into all kingdoms, Mark xvi. 15.

In the apostolic epistles we find many similar instances : thus St. Paul strenuously insists on justification by faith alone ; and James declares that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," which we have explained in a former Lecture, p. 239. In some epistles we find the peculiar doctrines of the gospel rather referred to as matters beyond dispute than fully stated and pressed on the people ; in others they are defended with great vehemence, and those who oppose them are anathematized. Different occasions demanded this different mode of address. When no opposition was made to these doctrines by the professors of Christianity, it was unnecessary to employ argument in their defence ; but, when the Jewish teachers and Gnostics obstructed the truths of the gospel, it became necessary to guard the Christian church from the influence of such teachers, and to expose their sophistries. In all these cases a change of words and actions is called for, and such change is regulated by occasions and circumstances, just as our statute books receive the accession of new articles, while many

of the old ones become obsolete and a dead letter, or as new municipal regulations are demanded by some new disorders, &c. These differences should unquestionably be carefully noticed by the preacher, who will thereby often be furnished with very appropriate thoughts for illustration, as well as for removing the difficulties which such differences may occasion. Mons. Claude observes, "When a weak scrupulosity or a tenderness of conscience was in question, which put some of the faithful upon eating only herbs, St. Paul exhorted the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak: 'Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him,' Rom. xiv. 3. But when the same St. Paul speaks of false teachers, who wanted to impose a yoke on conscience, and who, under pretext of meats and days, were attempting to join Moses with Jesus Christ, as if Christians were still obliged to observe the ceremonial law, then the apostle has no patience with them, but condemns and anathematizes them as people who preached another gospel, and exhorts the faithful to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage,' Gal. v. 1.

"So, again, when you find in the gospel that Jesus Christ sometimes forbade his disciples to publish the miracles that he wrought and declare his divinity, and at other times that he ordered them to publish upon the *house tops* what they had *heard in private*, and to preach to *all nations* the mysteries of the kingdom, you must remark that this difference is owing to different occasions. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, the mysteries of his kingdom were covered with the veil of his humiliation, it being necessary in some sense to conceal them; but, after his exaltation, it became proper to publish them to the whole earth.

"The same diversity may be remarked in what the Lord Jesus said to the Canaanitish woman, that he was 'sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' and that it was 'not meet to give the children's bread to dogs.' This seems contrary to an almost infinite number of passages of scripture which affirm that Jesus Christ is 'the light of the Gentiles'—'to him shall the gathering of the people be.' These and all other such passages will perfectly agree if you distinguish time and occasion. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, he was 'the minister of the circumcision;' but, when he departed to glory, his ministry extended over the whole earth."

It is unnecessary to add any further illustration of the use of this Topic in sermonizing. Perhaps it must be admitted that its province must be exclusively restricted to occasional observations. However, I cannot close my remarks upon it without suggesting that similar differences to those which occur in scripture will be required in your conduct as ministers. On the same principle that parents are obliged to resort to new measures to preserve family decorum, so pastors and teachers must adapt their instructions and their measures to the varying circumstances of the people. A heavy charge rests upon them; they stand in the capacity of rulers in Christ's name, and great responsibility attaches to their office. St. Paul intimates this when, addressing the people, he says, "Obey those that have the rule over you," Heb. xiii. 17. Indeed, if a minister has no authority, he can have no responsibility; and, if he has no responsibility, he can have no office; and there is an end of the whole affair at once. Some persons may think that the greatest share of responsibility ought to rest in the

deacons and members ; but the apostle Paul certainly did not intend these by the "rulers over the people ;" for the words are, "Obey those that have the rule over you, who *speak* to you in the name of the Lord." When ministers surrender any part of their office, I do not think it an act of any merit to themselves, or conducive to the real advantage of the people.

Perhaps these sentiments are gratuitous ; perhaps it will be thought that ministers know their office sufficiently. However, it will be agreed on all hands that, in the exercise of ministerial authority and ministerial address, many things must be said, or done, or omitted, according to circumstances, and that what is proper at one time may be highly improper at another. So long as different occasions occur, which no ordinary foresight can anticipate, different conduct and varied address must be resorted to by the Christian teacher. This could not fail to be noticed by discerning minds, and it has occasioned their just remarks. Mr. Howe, on Luke xix. 41, 42, says, "What are the things which belong to the peace of a people living under the gospel ? The things belonging to a people's peace are not throughout the same with all. Living or not living under the gospel makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient for them before to believe, more indefinitely, in a Messiah to come ; afterwards he plainly tells them, 'If you believe not that *I am he*, you shall die in your sins,' John viii. 24. Believing in Christ cannot be necessary, *as a duty*, to pagans who never heard of him, however necessary it may be as a means of their salvation. Their not believing in him cannot be in itself a sin, though by it they should want a remedy for their other sins ; but the case is very different with regard to us," &c.

I beg leave to observe, further, that there will sometimes be a necessity of acting or speaking in some new way, as new circumstances occur, or reformations are not to be looked for, and the order and purity of Christian communities are not likely to be preserved. Occasions are frequently occurring to call for firmness, and much wisdom is necessary to direct that firmness. By wisdom, however, I do not mean that crafty wisdom which priests employ to enslave the people, nor that boisterous, overbearing policy that deafens the voice of reason, nor a fearful and timorous prudence ; but "the wisdom which cometh from above," so beautifully described by James iii. 17, just such wisdom as St. Paul manifested on all occasions—the wisdom of the serpent united with the harmlessness of the dove. Painful as it may be, timely interference must be made. Nehemiah had a very painful duty to perform on a certain well-known occasion ; yet he flinched not from it, and he thereby saved the declining interest of religion from a fatal lapse and certain ruin. Want of courage in moments of difficulty is the very worst fault that can lie against a minister of religion. On the other hand, I am willing to allow that the necessity referred to must be apparent, indubitable, and imperious. Perpetual intermeddling rather weakens than strengthens authority, and ultimately defeats the purpose which it seeks to promote. Now here we must go by scripture instances of such real necessity, and these will, in some respects, guide our judgment. Observe the manner and suitable matter of Paul's address to Peter when he practised some dissimulation at Antioch, Gal. ii. What ! in the infancy of the church, must Jesuitism be charged upon one bearing the apostolic name ? shall the vilest

leprosy appear among holy brethren? or shall cowardice disgrace the character of Christ's ambassador? No; rather than these things should occur, Peter must be "withstood to the face;" and no doubt Peter was afterwards very thankful for this timely rebuke, by which the church was saved from dishonour.

Again: there was a time when the Galatians were so attached to Paul that they would have "plucked out their own eyes to give them to him;" but when a corrupted gospel invaded this church, and it became a question whether the pure or the spurious should stand, see with what spirit and with what wisdom too St. Paul acted: his love, his zeal, his holy jealousy gathered round his heart, and gave utterance to an epistle well calculated to produce compunction for their folly, and to restore order, peace, and love. On another occasion, when danger threatened the Corinthian church, with what a determined but tempered address Paul undertook the work of reformation! This was, as is well known, a mixed church. Some had great merit; these he highly commended. Some were wicked; these he threatened, and one he directed to be excommunicated, but afterwards, on his repentance, recommended a restoration. Some were given to a party spirit; these he cautions and instructs. Some abused the ordinance of the Supper; to these he gave a timely check. In short, he adopted his own rule given to the ministers of Thessalonica; he "warned the unruly," those bolder spirits that are impatient of all restraints, and who, the better to carry their purpose, endeavour to confederate others with them.

Now if we attend to the *spirit* of this Topic, and the hints suggested by it to our reflection, we shall be directed to the discreet and prudent conduct of a spiritual father, exercising that sound and healthy judgment which ever ought to pervade the ministerial character. The irresponsible individual has no such part to act; his own conduct is his only care; and it would have been well for some to have been so placed in the world. The mere preacher has but little to do with that wisdom to which we now refer; when his sermons are provided and delivered his work is done. He is one of those beautiful and melodious creatures that every body admires, but with whom no wise man is satisfied, and whom no wise congregation would choose for a regular pastor. He may please in the pulpit and the drawing-room: his cultivated mind, his fine taste, his ready wit and richness in anecdote, are qualities which cannot fail to give him an attractive influence. Besides, he cannot so break the rules of good breeding as to speak unpleasant things. With the sins and the follies of individuals he has no concern; indeed, he feels that he has no talent to manage them; and perhaps in this he is perfectly right—an office of difficulty must fall into better hands. But the true father of a spiritual family loses his individual character, and becomes in his speech, and in his conduct, and even in the expressions of his countenance, just what circumstances require of him, just what parental duty and rising occurrences urge upon him. He stands in Christ's stead in everything. He enters fully into the spirit of his office; his private feelings are placed in subjection or neutrality. With other ministers, and perhaps much in the same manner, "he preaches the word." He labours in season, but he has also some things to do as it were out of season, that is, when his public service is ended; then, if needs be, he reproves, rebukes, exhorts with all long-suffering, as often as new circumstances call for it; and this he does that the parties may be "sound in the

faith." In the exercise of that faithfulness and vigilance which his pastoral office demands, he uses entreaties, and addresses the objects of his care as "his little children," Gal. iv. Endearments the most tender will be mingled with his severest rebukes; so that his love, his anxiety for the welfare of the party, can never justly be doubted. His courage and firmness will be balanced with the "meekness and gentleness of Christ." There was no want of courage, faithfulness, and decision in the friends of Job, but they wanted the tenderness and fellow-feeling which his case required; they consequently added weight to his affliction, and forced him to cry out, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends!" Job xix. 21. We are not to "break the bruised reed," not to "destroy, but to save."

In acknowledging the difficulties of this work, it would be some consolation if any rules could be laid down for the guidance of those who desire to acquit themselves as good stewards of the divine word. But if the occurrence itself cannot dictate the proper course or expedient, if it defy your keenest penetration, I recommend the study of *precedents*. Some of these have been named in this Lecture from the scriptures, and many others might be referred to. The history of the church, and your own observation and experience, will furnish more. In this important matter, however, you must earnestly pray for divine direction.

TOPIC XVIII.

CONTRAST WORDS AND ACTIONS.

THIS and the preceding Topic may possibly, at first sight, seem to interfere with each other; but it will be manifest, on a little reflection, that the similarity between them is rather apparent than real, rather in sound than in sense. For the purpose of occasional observation, the foregoing Topic is certainly of some value, and has a province peculiar to itself; but it is very limited in its application, and furnishes no materials for divisions or extended discussion. Besides, it ought to be observed that when we compare two or more things together, and take notice of such differences as fall within the province of the foregoing Topic, our object is to show the substantial agreement which exists, notwithstanding these differences, or to examine where the truth lies; but we contrast things that are opposite to one another in order to make more striking a thing already known and acknowledged. The present Topic is of extensive application: perhaps there is no subject on which a reference to it may not assist the preacher, either in the study or in the pulpit; and it may be employed in any or every part of a discourse, as expediency may dictate. Contrast, it is obvious, may sometimes take the lead in an exordium, and at others it may bring up the rear in a peroration. On some occasions it may form one division or subdivision of a discourse, and on others every head or division will turn upon it. Sometimes it may be introduced as a figure of rhetoric, or as a casual illustration; and sometimes many contrasts may be clustered together in a kind of rhetorical close column, to aid the purpose of argument or persuasion. Mr. Robinson, who could be excellent when his wit would allow him, justly remarks on this subject that "there is no end of the utility of *contrast* in theology; it illustrates revelation by contrasting it with all the systems of false religion: 'Never man spake like this man,' John vii. 46,

It illustrates Christianity by placing it opposite to Judaism: 'You have not come to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion,' Heb. xii. 18. It distinguishes the true ministers of Jesus Christ from pretenders: 'We are not as many who corrupt the word of God; but *we* speak as of God,' 2 Cor. ii. 17. It displays the beauty of the true church by comparing it with the deformity of false religions: 'What agreement has the temple of God with idols?' 2 Cor. vi. 16. It is of excellent use in preaching the law, by contrasting what men *are* with what they *ought* to be, 2 Pet. iii. 11. It is excellently adapted to comfort, by contrasting the wisdom of Providence with the folly of him who complains of it, the sufficiency of pardoning mercy with the abundance of a sinner's unworthiness, the pleasures of piety with the amusements of sin, the privileges of a saint with the licentiousness of a sinner, the aids of the Holy Spirit with the efforts of the tempter. It will be of use in recovering a backslider, by comparing his present with his former state, Jer. ii. In these, and a thousand other cases, contrast is lovely beyond expression."

In his illustration of this Topic, Mons. Claude notices the contrast between Christ and his servants in the hour of martyrdom. He observes, "You may oppose the agonies and terrors which seized Jesus Christ at the approach of death to the constancy and joy of the martyrs, who flew to martyrdom as to a victory. This contrariety of emotions is accounted for by the difference of the persons. Jesus Christ was the reconciler of sinners unto God, bearing their sins, and engaging with the eternal justice of the Father; but the martyrs were believers, reconciled to God, fighting under Christ's banners, and, as mystical soldiers, maintaining his righteous claims. Christ was filled with a sense of God's wrath against sin; the martyrs were filled with a sense of his love to them. He met death as an armed enemy; but they approached him as a vanquished foe, or rather as an enemy reconciled, who, having changed his nature, became favourable to them. In one word, Jesus Christ was at war with death, whereas death was at peace and in friendship with the martyrs.

"In general we may affirm that contrast is one of the most beautiful topics of Christian rhetoric, and that which furnishes the most striking illustrations. Great care, however, must be taken that the opposition be natural, easy to comprehend, and properly placed in a full, clear light."

The human mind is so constructed as to be always pleased with contrasts; and accordingly the ingenuity of man has been put to its full stretch in order to produce them in relation to matters of sight, taste, &c. In music, for example, harmonies would not always please: a skilful composer therefore throws in discords at certain intervals, that his concords may return more pleasantly on the ear. The painter must, for the same reason, have his light and shade; and the cook finds it necessary to tempt and gratify the palate by producing his acids and his sweets in the same dish. Theatrical exhibitions are no doubt indebted to this love of contrast for much of their celebrity; for the characters of the drama are commonly most pleasing when set in the strongest point of opposition, which is sometimes carried to a degree that is almost ridiculous.

It has been often said, by critics in language, that the very free use of contrast is a fault. If, however, the scriptures are to form our standard, we shall be in little danger of offending by its too frequent employment; for there is probably no figure of rhetoric so much used in scripture as this: in

the hagiographical books contrasts are grouped so thickly as to raise our admiration and astonishment. The striking character of this Topic, and the facility with which it can be comprehended by the great mass of the people, furnish a powerful apology for its use ; and it is surely a pity (to use no stronger term) that well educated persons should indulge such a fastidious disposition as to nauseate that which is so useful to their less favoured brethren, besides which they ought to have some reverence for the example afforded by the extensive use that is made of it in the word of God. However, prudence will certainly dictate to the preacher the propriety of watching against real excess : even jewels and diamonds lose their effect by too great profusion.

The ample volumes of nature and providence abound with materials well adapted to the purpose of contrast ; and these furnish an interesting and intelligible language for expressing spiritual ideas. We have day and night, light and darkness, winter and summer, spring and autumn, heat and cold, tempest and serenity. In the earth we have barren and fruitful soils, lofty mountains and deep valleys, the arid desert and the flowing brook, &c. In the creatures what an endless catalogue of contrast is presented ! Animals fierce and tame, immensely large and diminutively small. The products of the ground how contrary ! Some vegetables bitter, some sweet ; some purgative, some astringent. In the structure of men's minds we observe a like variety : some are formed for soaring with almost the intelligence of angels, while others partake of the imbecility of idiots and are scarcely raised above the brutes ; some minds seem made for ruling, and others are quite of a passive character ; some are full of passion and feeling, while others are all indifference and apathy.

With regard to the primary intention of the Topic, as a topic of observation, it is not necessary for me to add anything. If you are preaching on some expression of the good man's feelings or desires, it may be placed in contrast with the desires and feelings of the wicked. If the conduct of the believer in Christ comes before you, it may be considered as contrasted with the conduct of the unbeliever in similar circumstances, &c. In fact, every thing that forms the subject of discourse must have some opposite, and, by placing it in contrast with such opposite, it will frequently be found to receive its strongest illustration ; for the most lovely object never appears so exquisitely beautiful as when placed by the side of deformity, nor does folly ever appear so conspicuously absurd as when contrasted with the dictates of true wisdom. That preacher who possesses the ability, natural or acquired, of thus placing the objects of instruction in contrast before his hearers, will consequently seldom fail to edify and please. Sometimes your text will *invite* a reference to this Topic by containing what may be called an implied contrast, as Isa. lxvi. 2 : "*To this man will I look who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word.*" Here there is an evident intention of contrasting the humble saint with the proud, superficial pretender to religion ; and if we would preserve the spirit of the text throughout our discussion, we must take due notice of such contrast. This may be done by observing that the individual here described as the object of divine complacency is,

I. The *poor* man, one who is sensible of his emptiness—in opposition to those who in their own eyes are "rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing," though in act they are "poor, and wretched," &c.

II. The *contrite* man, who grieves on account of his transgressions—in opposition to the fool, who mocks at sin and glories in that which is his shame.

III. The man who trembles at God's word—in opposition to the self-confident and the secure.

Mr. Jay has a beautiful sermon on the contrast plan, on Rom. v. 5 : "Hope maketh not ashamed." Here the words *not ashamed* suggested the antithesis ; for, if the Christian's hope be distinguished as one which maketh not ashamed, it is implied that all other hopes may make ashamed. He says,

- I. Certain kinds of hope do make ashamed.
 1. The hope of the worldling, by the insufficiency of its objects.
 2. That of the Pharisee, by the weakness of its foundation.
 3. That of the Antinomian, by the falseness of its warrant.
- II. The believer's on the contrary "maketh not ashamed."
 1. It is accompanied by divine love.
 2. This love characterises its possessors.
 3. It qualifies for that future glory upon which its intents are fixed.

Mr. Burder, on Num. xiv. 24 : "My servant Caleb, because he has another spirit," &c.

I. Real Christians are actuated by a spirit different from that of the world. "Caleb has *another* spirit."

II. Those who possess a right spirit will follow the Lord *fully*.

III. Those who follow the Lord fully shall be honourably distinguished by him.

Here the contrast forms the first head, and is again taken up in the second ; while in the preceding example the two general divisions contain the separate points to be contrasted. Some reflection is certainly required in order to determine the most suitable method of introducing a prominent contrast on any particular subject.

Beddome, on John viii. 9, "Being convicted by their own conscience," discusses the implied contrast. The words *own conscience* imply that there existed another species of conviction, that is, such as was impressed by the Spirit of God ; and here he establishes a contrast which pervades the whole discourse. The following is the division :

- I. Some distinctions with respect to conscience itself. It may be considered as,
 1. Ignorant or enlightened.
 2. Unnecessarily scrupulous or daringly presumptuous.
 3. Pure or defiled.
 4. Tender or seared.
 5. Peaceable or troublesome.
 6. Natural or renewed.
- II. The difference between natural and spiritual convictions.
 1. Natural convictions regard only the guilt of sin, as in the case of Cain ; the spiritual are attended with a deep and painful sense of inherent guilt and pollution, as in the parable of the prodigal.
 2. In natural convictions the soul is actuated by slavish fear ; but those of the divine Spirit have more of a regard to the honour of God.
 3. The natural extend only to some sin, as Achan and as Judas ; but the spiritual is convinced of all : "Come see a man that has told me all that ever I did."
 4. Natural conviction soon wears away ; the other is permanent.
 5. One may consist with love of sin, the other hates every false way.

I have selected these instances of implied contrasts for examples, because whenever contrast is thus noticed it discovers some ingenuity in the preacher, in discerning the justness of such a turn of thought. When this is done in a sensible manner it cannot fail, I should think, of producing a good effect, from the circumstance of its being unexpected by the audience.

The following are examples in which the preachers follow out the contrast which is expressed in the text itself.

I have already given a mere outline of Bishop Sanderson's famous sermon on Prov. xix. 21: "There are many devices," &c. As the bishop's works are however in but few hands, I may be allowed here to make an enlarged quotation. We have a proverb, "Man purposeth but God disposeth," not an unfit glossary on the text. Our author considers,

I. The different names here employed: Ours are "devices;" his are "counsels."

The names of things are used in scripture with far greater accuracy than in many other writings; the word "devices," for instance: in some cases these may appear to be wise, but compared with God's "counsels" they are only imaginations, or any lighter name that can be found; for every name is too high and too honourable to give expression to their vacuity and nothingness. Very chimeras they are, castles in the air, that have no real existence in them, no base or bottom to support them. They are fancies, and so the word might very well be translated: "There are many fancies in man's heart," such as may sometimes appear in madmen destitute of judgment, who will occasionally throw out such satirical wit, and make such smart repartees, as to excite astonishment. Or these fancies are like ill-concocted dreams, which represent golden mountains or airy nothings, which yet affect the dreamer excessively.* Solo-

* Mr. Howe pursues the subject of dreams very ingeniously in his sermon on 1 Thess. v. 6: "Let us not sleep as do others." Tracing the resemblances between a person in a state of sleep and a person in the delusions of fallen nature, he considers,

1. The sleep referred to.

As a state of forgetfulness. Sleepy persons are oblivious; so men are forgetful of their sinful, fallen state; they have forgotten their Creator, and the guide of their youth.

2. As a state of insensibility. Persons in a profound sleep cannot be made to feel without difficulty sometimes; you may even prick them, yet they do not feel. Sinners likewise are dead in sin, in a dead sleep, as we say; it is very difficult to prick them to the heart, Acts ii. 37.

3. As a state of security and unapprehensiveness of a future threatened danger. The house may be on fire, thieves and murderers at hand, the sword at the breast, or the knife at the throat, yet they are free from fear. Do we not see this exemplified in sinners? Destruction from the Almighty is no terror to them. Or like the nocturnal somnambulist, who if not prevented would climb parapets and incur ruin.

4. As a state of misapprehension. It is common for persons in sleep to have their heads full of false images, or false conceptions of things which are true; the case is so with the world in their sleep; they can tell you how to dis-imagine all the greatest realities and turn them into shadows. God and Christ, heaven and hell, they will call fancies; but the pomp and grandeur of this world which are truly so called (*μετα πολλης φαντασις*, Acts. xxv. 23) are counted by them as realities.

5. There is also (which is much like the last) a great unaptness to reflect upon anything as absurd, though never so truly so, which occurs to them in their dreaming state. Let things occur to them ever so absurd, they take no notice of the absurdity: let them dream themselves to be in ever such odd and antic postures or situations, they find no error; all is reality. And so is the case with the world too: the most absurd things imaginable are no absurdities to them; busying themselves all their days about mere trifles, the most absurd things that ever could enter into human imagination so much as to think of, are yet no absurdities to them, even to live without God in the world, though he made and preserves them, without any care whether they go to hell or not.

6. The proper business of life is suspended (Prov. vi. 9, 10); and so it is with men in the affair of salvation, Heb. ii. 3.

7. They are greatly displeased with those who attempt to rouse them, and they will quarrel with the light itself if it shine upon their faces; the very case with those who are in the deep sleep of sin.

II. Upon what account it ill becomes Christians to imitate these sleepers. It is very unsuitable,

1. To their principles.

2. To their state.

3. To their designs and ends.

món treats of these as "vanity, folly, and madness," Eccles. ii. 1, 2, &c. They applaud themselves in their cunning and deep contrivances; they trust to their wealth, power, strength, or policy; they think they can carry all before them, yet all shall terminate "like a dream when one awaketh: so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city." There is a similar representation in Isa. xxix. 7, 8: Those that fight against "Mount Zion shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth that he is eating," &c. Or the deepest policy shall be as a spider's web; that is one of the prophet's comparisons too, a thing of great curiosity to the eye, spun of a most fine, subtle thread, and in a most exact proportion, but a thing of no strength at all, unless against a small fly (the greater ones will break through it): the slightest touch strikes it all away in a moment.

Now contrast these with God's eternal purposes—it is not so with them. They are sage counsels, called "the counsel of the Lord," Ps. xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." This seems copied in the New Testament, Ephesians i. 11: "According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Yet we are not to receive the term in its proper sense. In strictness God neither counsels nor debates, nor "has any counselled him," Rom. xi. 34. God has no need of these: in truth, as the word *devices* was too high in the former case, so the word *counsel* is too low in the present case. Scripture in this, as well as in many other parts, adapts its language to men's understandings; as, "By him actions are weighed," so here the divine determinations are called counsels. Such are the resolutions which, following upon good advice and mature deliberation, where all the circumstances are taken into due consideration, and the conveniences and inconveniences examined and weighed, and they are better approved of, as being more solid, and likely to prove more successful, than those sudden motions that light people hit upon—as lightning, which is but a flash, while sound counsels are like the sun, which has a full and durable light within itself, always alike, though sometimes under a cloud. God's counsels "of old are faithfulness and truth."

II. There is a difference as to number. Ours are "devices," in the plural number, and with the express addition of multiplicity, "many devices," God's is but one—"counsel," in the singular.

Men's purposes are various and changeable. Seldom do we continue long in one mind, but on every slight occasion, as the weathercock with the wind, we are ready to turn and face about. What between fears and hopes, desires and cares, our thoughts are so pulled and harrowed this way and that way that we are often so distracted that we scarcely know what the next expedient ought to be. Sometimes this is not of necessity, but a change of mere whim or caprice—fond, like children, of a toy this moment, the next throwing it away for another, *Quod petit spernit*; and men are thus "troubled about many things." All this proves this one thing, at the least—the positive insufficiency of all and every earthly good.

It is no commendation then, but rather a disparagement, to men's devices that they are so many; but it is the honour of God that his counsel is but one and unchangeable. We find it expressed with that adjunct, Heb. vi. 17, *το αμεταβητον της βουλης*—"the immutability of his counsel;" and it is there laid down as the great foundation of Christian hope, and the very strength of our consolation. *Quod scripsi, scripsi*. What he has written in the secret book of his determinate counsel, though it be counsel to us and uncertain until he reveal it or the event discover it, yet it is most certain in itself, and altogether unchangeable. We follow our devices many times, which we afterwards repent; and truly our second thoughts are mostly the best. But with him there is no after-counsel to correct the errors of the former. He knoweth not any such thing as repentance—it is altogether hidden from his eyes. He is, indeed, sometimes said to repent, as Gen. vi. 6, and Jonah iii. 10; but this is not ascribed to God properly, but as other human passions and affections are, as grief, sorrow, &c., to import some actions of God, eventually and according to the manner of our understanding resembling the operations which those passions produce in us, but have nothing at all of the nature of those passions in him. See Num. xxiii. 19.

III. The different manner of their existing. Ours are but conceived in the heart; but he is able to give real subsistence to his designs and to make them stand fast and firm: "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

It is not material here whether our devices be hatched in the heart or the head, whether they relate to the affections or the understanding; how many soever they may be, unless God give leave, there they must stay. It is no matter how man plots

and contrives to avoid this and that danger, to compass this or that design, to gratify this friend or advance that child, to counteract or defeat that enemy ; for when man has summoned all his powers, and set all his wits to work to manage his design and make all sure, unless God say Amen, and unless it please him to prosper this or that—all is in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2. These thoughts may indeed reach the tongue, and man may speak “great swelling words of vanity;” but still, if God put a negative to his affirmative, it is soon settled, as in the fool’s scheme in the gospel, or as Sennacherib in Hezekiah’s time. But, as to the counsel of God, it is established like the everlasting mountains, which cannot be moved. What he has purposed either to do himself or to have done by any of his creatures shall most certainly and most infallibly come to pass in every circumstance, just as he has appointed it. It is established in the heavens ; and though all the powers in earth and hell should join their forces together, and set their shoulders and strength against it, and thrust sorely at it that it may fall, yet shall they never be able to move nor shake it, much less to remove it from the place where it stands or to overthrow it. This, I presume, has been sufficiently established, as Matt. xvi. 18. Not only because of the eternity of his own being, or because he is the author of all being, but also because he is able to give being, reality, and subsistence to his own will and words, and to all his purposes and promises.

Our excellent author establishes this point on such perfections of God as bear upon this subject—his sovereignty, his eternity, his wisdom, and his power—topics to the study of which you should devote your noblest intellectual powers.

Davies, on 2 Cor. iv. 18 : “While we look not at the things which are seen,” &c. Here also the contrast lies in the text itself, and a heavenly-minded preacher must dwell with delight on such a contrast. Our author proposes,

I. To give a comparative view of visible and invisible things. This I do, he observes, that you may see the trifling nature of the one, and the importance of the other, under one head.

II. To show the great and happy influence which a suitable impression of the superior importance of invisible to visible things would have upon us.

The whole sermon is full of contrast ; and it is conducted in such a manner as at once to impress and instruct.

The same author, vol. iii., p. 189, on Matt. ix. 12 : “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

I. The character of the “whole.”

1. They are such as never had any clear and affecting sight or sense of sin.
2. They are easy and secure. Hence,
3. They are unwilling to apply to a physician.

II. The character of the “sick.”

1. They are willing to do anything, to submit to any thing, if it may but save them from the mortal disease of sin.
2. They are satisfied that Jesus is the only physician of souls ; they rely upon his skill, love, and care.
3. They come to Jesus and are healed.

This is not one of Davies’s best sermons ; and I have been obliged to alter the second part to preserve the contrast : the subject itself is well suited to a mixed congregation.

Beddome, James ii. 18 : “Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will show mine by my works.”

I. True faith is a visible grace ; defective faith is audible only.

II. True faith is fruitful ; faith without works is dead.

III. Those who pretend to faith, and yet are destitute of good works, are awfully deceived.

Surely such contrasts as these will supply the place of many arguments ;

for we see here at a glance the case as it stands. In short, contrast is argument in miniature, *multum in parvo*. It is like flame or blaze, in comparison with smoke; for argument is often as dark as smoke, at least to illiterate people.

We have an instance of contrast conducted in a different form in Walker's on 1 Thess. ii. 4: "But, as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." His arrangement is as follows:—Consider,

I. The nature and extent of the divine principle mentioned in the text—a supreme desire to please God.

II. The happy effects which would flow from our being animated with this steady and prevailing desire.

1. This would make us ready to every good word and work.

2. Our conduct would thereby be consistent and uniform.

3. A sincere desire of pleasing God would lessen the difficulties of obedience, and support us under all the sufferings to which duty may expose us.

But to set these advantages in a more striking light, let us,

III. Examine the opposite principle, and take a view of the man whose great aim is to obtain the approbation of his fellow-creatures. Consider,

1. To what drudgery he submits.

2. How trivial the acquisition, should he succeed.

3. To what disappointments he is exposed.

4. How precarious and uncertain the possession.

This outline possesses a quality distinct from all the former, by its being addressed more to the philosophy of the mind and its reasoning powers; but the strength and excellence of the discourse is owing to the contrast exhibited. I may also add that the last head of discourse appears to have been suggested by our 18th Topic, as there is nothing in the words of the text to lead particularly to this mode of illustration, though it is very suitable. Blair's sermon on the Love of Praise, to which I shall have occasion to refer in a future Lecture, is comparatively weak for want of that antithesis in which Walker's excels.

The following is from Mr. Edward Cooper, whose work has gone through many editions. Matt. vi. 24: "No man can serve two masters," &c. Here the contrast is in the "two masters," &c. He proposes to,

I. Open the text, by stating the case which it exhibits.

II. Consider the contrast it contains, and the separate demands alluded to. God's demands are of the highest order—God peremptorily says, Love thy neighbour; Mammon says, Love thyself.

These and similar contrasts are pursued to a great length.

You have an instance of the use of this Topic in Ps. cxlv. 16: "Thou openest thine hand," &c.; and here Mr. Fuller leads you into the practice of contrast in the most familiar manner possible.*

I shall conclude this lecture by giving an instance of argumentative contrast, something similar to which, if it be not inimitable, may be thrown into any part of a discourse. It is addressed to light and thoughtless youth, who are prejudiced against religion; but the whole essay ought to be read a dozen times over for its matter, manner, and style, which are of the highest order. The devotee of youthful folly and dissipation is introduced as murmuring at the restraints and the sanctions of religion:—

A cruel alternative! to yield such submission or incur such consequences. Is it not

* See page 24 of this volume.

hard that I should be required to surrender all the delights which are the privilege of my age, to repress my vivacity, to forsake my gay society, to abandon my amusements, to inflict self-denial at every turn, to deplore all that I am and all that I have been, to force my attention and affections away from this interesting world around me towards another and unseen world of which I know nothing, to toil through severe and never-ceasing exercises called discipline, to exhaust my spirits in solemn reflection, to live in terror lest every thing I do or enjoy should be sin, to renounce and put myself in conflict with the prevailing habits of society, to be marked as an over-righteous or melancholy mortal, to look through a darkened medium at every thing in life, and go through the world thinking of every step as a progress towards the grave?

But you well know that such a representation is no just account of the demands of religion. At the same time we wish not to keep out of view nor to underrate, as some persons have injudiciously attempted to do, the austerer characteristics of Christianity. It must be unequivocally avowed that religion, effectually prosecuted, does involve great labours, a discipline often severe, and therefore many painful experiences. It must include much that is mortifying to natural inclinations. How should it be otherwise with a being of a corrupt nature, who is to be trained and prepared, and that while under the incessant influences of a corrupt world, for a final state of holiness and felicity? If the natural condition of the mind be uncongenial with what is divine and heavenly—if its affections be unattempered to love and delight in that element which is the vitality of the happiness of the beings whom, alone and exclusively, the revelation from God, and even your own reason, authorize you to conceive of as happy in a superior state,—if there be this alienation and unfitness (and what is the aversion to religion but the proof of it? or rather it is the thing itself),—if the case be so, then the soul is so dreadfully wrong that it is not strange the agency for transforming it should inflict pain in the salutary process. That it should work with some expedients of bitterness, keenness, and fire, is quite in analogy with the operations necessary for subduing the extreme maladies of an inferior order.

Religion, it is acknowledged, brings its pains, just because it comes from heaven to maintain a deadly conflict in the soul with principles and dispositions which are rebellious against heaven and destructive to the soul itself. It is fit that you should see the whole truth, and clearly understand that the agent which, in a capacity like that of a tutelary spirit, takes in charge a perverted, sinful, tempted being, to be humbled and reclaimed, taught many mortifying lessons, disciplined through a series of many corrections, reproved, restrained and incited, and thus conducted onward in advancing preparation for the happiness of another world, must be the inflicter of many pains during the progress of this beneficent guardianship. And it is not, as your aversion and murmurs would imply, the fault of religion that the case is so, but of that depraved nature which religion is designed and indispensable to redeem.

So much for the darker side. But now, on the other hand, you can surely conceive, as compatible with all this, a great preponderance of happiness in this religious life, which, before you had duly weighed, you thought to be incompatible with it. And therefore you ought to take it on your conscience, as a reproach for criminal want of thought or of honesty, that you admitted no other notion of religion than that of a gloomy, melancholy thing. Instead of turning away from it as a grim and ghostly object, sent to encounter you for no more friendly purpose than to obstruct you, with threatening aspect, at every avenue to the scenes of delight, there ought to arise within your mind a sterner image to condemn you for wilfully misjudging its character and the service it has to offer you. For you *can* comprehend that there is attainable, through the efficiency of religion, something far better than all you can hope ever to enjoy under the unhallowed advantage of rejecting it. Try faithfully whether you cannot understand that it would be a great felicity to feel that your spirit is changing into conformity to a nobler model, growing into the only right constitution and image to be retained for ever, to feel that the evil which infests it is shrinking and subdued under a mightier power, to regard the best and greatest Being as no longer an appalling object, thought of with reluctance and a wish that you could be for ever out of his sight and reach, but now with emotions of love, and confidence, and hope, with an assurance of his mercy through Jesus Christ, with an experience of real communication with him concerning all your interests, and with a consciousness that you are in activity for a Master who will confer an infinite reward. Think whether it would not be happy to feel habitually a power maintaining a sacred control over your passions and your will and preserving the current of your life unmingled with the world's pollutions. Imagine yourself animated at the close of each year, or shorter period, with fervent

gratitude to God in consideration of what sins and follies he has saved you from thus much longer. Can you doubt whether that one emotion would really be worth more, to an accountable being, than all the pleasurable feelings which an irreligious person can have enjoyed during the whole interval?

Place before your mind a scheme of life in which you shall see yourself committed to the care and disposal of a beneficent Providence, the course of your life from the beginning, with a constant assurance that sovereign wisdom and goodness will watch over all its movements and events, will conduct you through its perplexities and perils, will give you just so much temporal good that more will not be for your welfare, and will constrain all things you are to pass through to co-operate to your ultimate happiness. Think also of enjoying the consciousness that you are not throwing the inestimable spring-season of your life away, but expending it so as to enrich every succeeding period, and to ensure a fine setting sun upon the last. Say, honestly, whether all this be not something better than any scheme of life which you have indulged your imagination in shaping. Or, if you sometimes surrender yourself to the fascinations of romance and poetry, glowing over bright pictures of felicity in which religion has no place, make the experiment on your mind, in a hour of cooler feeling, whether you dare pronounce that it would be well to forego this happiness of religion by a preference of that which is exhibited in these highly coloured fictions, on the supposition that they could, for you, be turned into reality. Yes, if these images could be turned into facts; but let me hint to you that the very exhibitors of these delectable fabrications out of air would scorn you folly in expecting any such realisation.

Observe some of those young persons (I hope you are not so unfortunate as not to know such) whom you yourself believe to be most under the power of religion; call them, if you will, its prisoners, its bondmen, its slaves; some of your gay companions attempt to ridicule them as its fools; but do you observe whether their piety conduces to their happiness. It is true they are not happy after the manner in which your lighter friends account of happiness—not happy if the true signs of that state be a volatile spirit, a continual glitter of mirth, a dissipation of mind and time among trifles, a dread of reflection and solitude, an eager pursuit of amusements; in short, a prevailing thoughtlessness, the chief suspensions of which are for the study of matters of appearance and fashion, the servile care of faithfully imitating the habits and notions of a class, or perhaps the acquirement of accomplishments for show. It must be confessed they have thoughts too grave, the sense of too weighty an interest, a conscience too solicitous, and purposes too high, to permit them any rivalry with the votaries of such felicity. Certainly they feel a dignity in their vocation which denies them the pleasure of being frivolous. But you see them often cheerful and sometimes very animated. And their animation is of a deeper tone than that of your sportive creatures; it may have less of animal briskness, but there is more soul in it. It is the action and fire of the greater passions, directed to greater objects. Their emotions are more internal and cordial; they can be cherished and abide within the heart with a prolonged, deep, vital glow; while those which spring in the youthful minds devoid of reflection and religion seem to give no pleasure but in being thrown in volatile spirits at the surface. Did you think that these disciples of religion must renounce the love of pleasure? Look then at their policy for securing it. The most unfortunate calculation for pleasure is to live expressly for it. They live primarily for duty, and pleasure comes as a certain consequence. If you have but a cold apprehension of the degree of such pleasure, if you can but faintly conceive how it should be exquisite, you can at least understand that it must be genuine. And there is in it what may be called a principle of accumulation; it does not vanish in the enjoyment, but, while passing as a sentiment remains as a reflection, and grows into a store of complacent consciousness, which the mind retains as a possession left by what has been possessed. To have had such pleasures is pleasure, and is so still the more the more of it is past. Whereas you are aware, if you have been at all observant of the feelings betrayed by the youthful children of folly in the intervals of their delights (and does nothing in your experience obtrude the same testimony?), that those delights, when past, are wholly gone, leaving nothing to go into a calm habitual sense of being happy. The pleasure is a blaze which consumes entirely the material on which it is lighted, so that the uncalculating youth who seized a transient pleasure last week, or yesterday, has no satisfaction from it to-day, but rather, perhaps, feels fretted with a sense of being cheated, and left in an irksome vacancy, from which he has no relief but in recovering his eagerness to pursue another, which is, in the same manner, to pass entirely away. To insist, therefore, that religion is better than this giddy course, as productive of happiness in this life, would seem but an impertinent pleading in its favour.

Now, for once, be a thoughtful and serious being, willing to apprehend the contrast between all this vanity of pursuit and the state of a young person who feels a profound conviction that he has made the right choice, who finds that his grand purpose will bear the severest exercise of his judgment and pleases him the most when he judges the most rigorously, who feels an elation of spirit in vowing an eternal fidelity to his object, who beholds it undiminished in excellence when gloom overspreads his other interests and prospects, a luminary which shines through and shines the brighter for the darkness.—*Foster's Introductory Essay to the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.**

LECTURE XXIII.

TOPIC XIX.

EXAMINE THE GROUNDS OF AN ACTION OR EXPRESSION AND SHOW THE TRUTH OR EQUITY OF IT.

WHEN the incarnation of Jesus Christ is in question, as in John i. 14, "And the word was made flesh," &c., &c., you may recur to the foundation of this truth, as revealed in scripture, in order to show that a divine person did take upon him real and proper humanity, in opposition to the notions of some ancient heretics, who imagined that the human nature of Christ was only apparent. For this purpose you must look into the ancient prophecies for such passages as attribute two natures to Christ, Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6; Mic. v. 1. To the same purpose you may also apply New Testament texts which speak of the same subject, as Matt. i. 21, 23; Luke i. 31, 35; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. ii. 14, &c. And you may further observe such reasons for this singular economy as theology furnishes, and which are taken from the design of our salvation.

In like manner, when you treat of the resurrection of Christ, or his ascension to heaven, you must take this Topic, and show the fidelity and credibility of the testimony borne by the disciples. Your argument may be established by observing what followed his resurrection and ascension, as the effusion of the Spirit, the abolition of the empire of the devil and his idols, the conversion of whole nations to the worship of the one true God, miracles, prophecies, &c. Thus the scriptures are the ground of our faith; our doctrines are the ground of our practice; the love and good pleasure of God are the ground of salvation.

The same method is proper when some *predictions* are your subjects, as the destruction of Jerusalem and the rejection of the Jews; for you may either narrate history to show the *execution*, or you may reason upon the subject to show how wonderful the divine *wisdom* was in that dispensation: the whole will evince the truth of the predictions.

The grounds of an action or expression may very properly be examined, to show its equity or truth, when any thing surprising and uncommon is in question, for such things at first seem to shock the minds of auditors; or when you are pressing home an exhortation to the practice of any duty which cannot be performed without difficulty. For example: The Pharisees complained that the disciples of Christ did *not keep the tradition of the elders*. In order to justify the disciples, you may show the foundations of Christian liberty, and remark that the true worship of God does not consist in the

* See also Howe, in Stafford, on Romans; or Howe's Living Temple; Chalmers on Astronomy; and on Ezek. xxxiii. 32, Jortin, vol. ii., p. 305.

observance of external ceremonies, much less in the observance of human traditions and customs ; but it consists in true piety, real inward holiness, and actual obedience to the commandments of God.

Again, Jesus Christ, after he had healed the paralytic man, commanded him to *sin no more, lest a worse thing should come unto him*. Here you must go to the grounds of the expression to show its equity. These are, that some sins had drawn the wrath of God upon him before,—that, if he continued in them, that wrath would certainly return,—that the favours which we receive from God engage us to glorify him by good works, &c.

Further : Suppose your text to be Matt. xvi. 24 : “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” Here you may show,

1. That these words have an immediate reference to some good end—an end the most worthy of the Christian character and calling—the Christian ministry : consequently such mortifications and self-denial as are really necessary to that end must be imposed.

2. That the injunction supposes something within us which would, if not restrained, obstruct the accomplishment of that end, and which must be denied most peremptorily, steadily, and perseveringly.

3. That such end should be so clearly kept in view, so impressively felt, and so highly prized, as to induce us to deny ourselves, and to, lay aside every weight, &c., Heb. xii. 1.

4. That this self-denial is nothing else but an exchange of objects, the glory of God, the good of souls, instead of that mean thing called *self*; in all its hateful forms and detestable bearings. It is nothing more than an exchange of gratifications, the gratifications arising from the pleasure of doing good, instead of eating, drinking, ease, and carnal pleasures, which if pursued, would only terminate in disease of body and guilt of conscience. It is but putting a wholesome restraint on the worst principle of our nature—selfishness.

In the original title of this Topic Monsieur Claude proposes to examine the *grounds* and *causes* of action, &c. ; but as the two ideas appear to me perfectly distinct, and as I have included the latter under the Topic “Principles,” to which I think it properly belongs, I shall confine my present observations to the former, and endeavour as much as possible to abstain from every idea to which my remarks on the twelfth Topic referred. It is quite possible, however, that after all the care I can bestow to preserve consistency I may, in some measure, fail of accomplishing this purpose, and I must acknowledge that the grounds of a subject may lie in its principle or in its implications : but it would have been evidently improper to throw the whole subject of grounds into either of those departments ; for, besides the possible error involved in it, this would have been throwing the greater into the less.

This Topic comprehends all the points of consideration on which any doctrine or practice is founded—the proofs or arguments by which any truth is supported or any practice enforced. Grounds may sometimes be cast into a propositional form ; and may be in their nature theological or moral, practical or experimental, persuasive or cautionary ; or the Topic may be turned against error, false grounds, and vain pretences. In a field so extensive and so important the preacher can never want matter ; something upon one or other of these heads will be continually recurring either in the beginning or body of the discourse. However, I would not have the people to be teased perpetually with an extensive discussion of the grounds of every truth brought before them, as this might have the effect of diminishing their

attention : "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven ;" and even when the thing is proper enough in itself, and quite seasonable, yet there is a *quantum sufficit*, and a time to have done, or to pass on to the other parts of the discourse. Sometimes a passing remark on the Topic will be sufficient; and frequently this may form the exordium of your discourse. Since, however, there can be little difficulty in applying the Topic in its less extended form, as a Topic of observation, I shall not here detain you with any further illustrations, but shall proceed at once to place before you some examples in which the Topic forms a prominent part, and I trust that some of these examples will be found so excellent and instructive as to require no apology.

Mr. Simeon furnishes an example, on the doctrine of the Trinity, the first part of which is formed on the Topic. His text is Isa. xlviii. 16 : "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me."

So mysterious and important a doctrine as that of a trinity of persons in the Godhead ought not to be founded on any grounds which are not clear, strong, adequate, and convincing. But it may be illustrated from passages on which we could not altogether venture to establish it. Such is the present text. In the forty-seventh chapter God is declaring that he will destroy Babylon and restore his captive people to their own land ; and throughout the chapter whence the text is selected, he warns his people to bear in remembrance that he had foretold this event several hundred years before it should be accomplished, and that consequently, when it should occur, they must trace it to Jehovah himself, who had fore ordained this deliverance, and designed it to be a type of that greater deliverance which he would effect for a ruined world. It is in this connexion that the speaker says, "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me;" and, if the prophet be the speaker, then the sense of the passage is clear, viz.: The Lord has sent me to announce to you these great events. But if the speaker be the Son of God, which is more agreeable with the context, then a small alteration must be made in our translation, and the passage must be read, "Now the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit,"—hath sent me to effect this great deliverance, and his Spirit to reveal it unto you ; and this is the sense which most expositors adopt. But, whichever construction we prefer, the passage clearly intimates a plurality in the persons of the Godhead, which is the doctrine now to be established. Let us,

I. Trace the scriptural authority on which this doctrine is grounded.

We may reasonably expect the doctrine of the Trinity, if true, to pervade the scriptures throughout. Accordingly we do find it more or less clearly intimated from the beginning. We may trace it,

1. In the Old Testament. In the very first chapter of the Bible, where the creation of all things is declared, there is a plurality of persons mentioned as determining to complete the whole by the formation of man : Gen. i. 26. So again at the expulsion of man from Paradise a similar representation is given : iii. 22. At the building of the tower of Babel, also, the Deity speaks of himself in the same manner : xi. 7. In like manner, where the Messiah is spoken of, a plurality is almost always marked. In his qualification for his work : Isa. xi. 2 ; lxi. 1. The effect of his mission : Zech. ii. 11.

2. In the New Testament. Mark the terms in which his incarnation was announced : Luke i. 35. His consecration to the mediatorial office at his baptism : Matt. iii. 16, 17. See also Matt. xxviii. 19 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

II. Consider the particular offices attributed in scripture to Father, Son, and Spirit. These clearly manifest the distinction which we are considering.

1. The Father is the fountain from whom the whole of salvation proceeds.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to procure salvation for us : Isa. xlii. 1 ; Ps. xl. 6—8 ; Eph. v. 2.

3. The Holy spirit applies this salvation to us. See John xv. 26, xvi. 14, xvi. 8, xiv. 16 ; 1 Thess. v. 23 ; Rom. viii. 16 ; Eph. i. 13, 14 ; Rom. viii. 11 ; and particularly notice what Peter says (1 Pet. i. 2) : "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

III. The comfort which the knowledge of these facts is calculated to give.

Almost endless are the blessed inferences that would follow upon the doctrine in

hand ; but it must suffice to mention two things. Have the sacred Three so concurred in the work of redemption ? Then we may be assured of,

1. The readiness of Jehovah to save us.
2. The sufficiency of the salvation thus provided.

Here are exhibited those substantial grounds of the doctrine which ought to pass, not only into every congregation, but also into every school in the kingdom. I should recommend the preacher to enlarge by comment, modestly but firmly expressing his sentiments. So great a man as Dr. Beattie has thrown a damp upon teaching children the doctrines of Christianity, "because," he says, "they cannot understand them." "Great men are not always wise ;" and here is a proof of it : for a more mischievous and censurable sentiment cannot be uttered. According to this logic grown people must not attempt any thing upon the doctrine of the Trinity, because they cannot comprehend the subject !

As the above sentiment of Dr. B. has spread itself far and wide, and is acted upon very extensively, but especially in our public boarding schools, and as our Sunday schools are not out of danger, I beg leave to ask the philosophers of Dr. Beattie's school, What is it that it is desirable should grow up in the minds of youth and pervade the whole life ? Is it sacred truth ? Then plant the germ of truth early ; fix it in the mind ; there let it grow into more perfect knowledge, and strengthen into sound principles of action. I do not expect the child perfectly to know what it learns : I do not myself know many things which yet I am aiming at ; but the elements of knowledge must be imbibed before good effects can be expected. "Timothy from a child knew the Holy Scriptures." How did he know them ? Just as a child could know them. When did the use of his knowledge appear ? When Paul wrote to him in subsequent life, when pressing upon us innumerable requirements of skill, in which nothing but scripture can direct us with safety. Away, therefore, with such sentiments as Beattie's in this matter.

It is astonishing that this wise age should blunder upon that old, well-marked rock of forming character upon morals, and encourage the delusion of acquiring doctrines afterwards. Doctrines must first be acquired ; and morals are to be established upon those doctrines which form their best motives and firmest support.

Mr. Simeon gives us also an example in which the second part of the subject turns upon our Topic. The text is 1 Pet. ii. 13—17 : "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man," &c. The sermon is the substance of what the author preached on the coronation of George IV. He commences very properly by observing,

The great duty of a Christian minister is to exalt the Saviour, and to call men to submit to *his* government. But we cannot truly submit to Christ, unless we yield obedience to those laws which relate to our conduct in civil life, as well as those which refer to the inmost workings of our soul towards God ; and we should be wanting in our duty as Christian pastors if we did not avail ourselves of suitable occasions for opening to you a subject of such importance. Consider.

I. Our duty in relation to civil government. It is called in the text an "ordinance of man ;" and so it is as far as it relates to the particular *form* of government established in any kingdom. Yet, in its original appointment, civil government proceeds from God himself : Rom. xiii. 1. Our subjection to it is therefore a part of the duty we owe to God, and hence we are required to submit to the ordinances of man "for the Lord's sake." See Rom. xiii. 1, 2, and 5.

II, The grounds and reasons of it. These are,

1. Its being altogether of God's appointment. The power exercised by earthly rulers is God's authority delegated to men. It is not man, therefore, but God, whom we are called to obey: Num. xvi. 11; 1 Sam. viii. 7; Rom. xiii. 4. We are to "submit" ourselves to man, "for so is the will of God."

2. Its conduciveness to the public welfare. Though authority may not always be exerted aright, yet it is ordained for the public good—"the punishment of evil-doers, and the benefit of those who do well." Suppose the laws of the land to be suspended, and every one left to follow the bent of his will without fear and without restraint, what misery would soon pervade the kingdom; what scenes of rapine, violence, and cruelty would the country present!

3. Its tendency to recommend religion. God has special respect to this: it is "his will" that we should fulfil this duty, "that by well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." This should be an object near to the heart of all the Lord's people; and they should labour to accomplish it "for the Lord's sake."

III. The manner in which it should be performed—

1. With integrity of mind.

2. With an harmonious attention to all other duties.

This last subdivision is very judicious, as affording an opportunity for entering on topics of higher and more momentous interest than those which refer to civil government. The text and the occasion sufficiently justify Mr. Simeon's remarks, and he brings the matter fairly before us. The language is temperate and judicious, and offers no offence to the high or low party: this accords with my own sentiments. I would not have ministers abandon the right of private judgment, or the exercise of any constitutional privileges; but I beg leave to say that the high character of the preacher of the gospel should never merge in that of a politician.

The following is also from Simeon on 2 Thess. iii. 5: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God," &c.

I. The objects of the apostle's wish.

II. The grounds or reasons of it.—Many considerations might be mentioned, but they may be comprised under two heads:—

1. The attainment of such a state would be conducive to their present happiness.

2. It was indispensably necessary to their future welfare.

The following outline is introduced more on account of its subject than for the sake of adding to a list of examples already sufficiently numerous for our purpose. Walker, vol. iii. p. 213, on family worship; 2 Sam. vi. 20: David's return to bless his household.

I. Prove the indispensable duty of family worship.

1. From the light of nature.—A family is a society connected together by such strict ties that every argument for the propriety of private prayer is equally conclusive for that of family devotion. Of this even the heathens were sensible; for besides their tutelary deities, who were supposed to preside over cities and nations, and who had public honours paid to them in that character, we read of household gods,* whom every private family worshipped at home as their immediate guardians and benefactors.

2. From the word of God.—The light of scripture affords us a more clear and satisfying discovery of our obligations to this duty, as well as of the proper manner of performing it. Thus we are commanded to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to continue in prayer." And it is observable that this exhortation is particularly addressed to masters of families, as you may read (Col. iv. 1, 2), "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." The apostle goes on, still addressing them in the same character, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving." In the same strain Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 8), "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting." And surely

* Laban's were of this kind, and in the British Museum there are some hundreds of these to be seen.

if in all places men ought to lift up holy hands unto God, much more ought they to do so in their own families, which are immediately under their care, and for whose spiritual as well as temporal interests they ought to be chiefly concerned. Accordingly we learn from the sacred history that this has been the uniform practice of good men in all ages of the world.

1.) The care of the ancient patriarchs to keep up family religion is very remarkable. We find Abraham setting up altars wherever he came; and for what end did he this, but that on these altars he might offer sacrifices, and call upon God with his household? We have another bright example of this in Job, of whom we read (Job i. 5) that "he sent for his sons and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings for each of them." And, lest it might be thought that this family worship was only occasional and accidental, it is added at the close of the verse, "Thus did Job continually."

2.) The same good practice was continued after the Jews were formed into a national church, and had priests appointed to preside in the public worship. Thus Joshua vowed, not only for himself, but likewise for his house, that they would serve the Lord, which plainly imports a resolution on his part to use all the means in his power to make his family do so, particularly to worship God before them, and to take care that none should dwell in his house who would not join in this holy service. The example of David in the text is abundantly plain; for, though he had priests and Levites about him, yet he did not devolve the work upon them, but he himself, as the head and master of the house, "blessed his household."

3.) In the New Testament writings it is very usual to give private families of devout Christians the name of *churches*. But surely this would have been a most improper appellation if God had not been publicly acknowledged, and the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise had not been offered in them.

II. Point out the reasons on which this duty is grounded.

1. Families are natural societies, formed originally by God, and held together by his providence, and they must have subjects in common for prayer and praise.

2. As God is the founder, so he is likewise the gracious benefactor, of our families. If personal blessings claim the private acknowledgments of the person who receives them, family blessings ought in like manner to be acknowledged by united thanksgivings in our household. Were a man, having a numerous offspring, to receive some signal favour from an earthly benefactor, by which his circumstances were changed from meanness and want to an easy or a decent competence, would it not be a natural acknowledgment for him to bring his family and children in their best apparel, and present them to his benefactor, fed and clothed with his bounty, to offer him their united thanks? Would not such a scene be delightful on both sides? Would it not be enjoyed as a very lovely appearance, even by a mere spectator? And is there less beauty or propriety in the same acknowledgments offered to God in whom we live and breathe, and who gives us all things richly to enjoy? Does he set the hedge of his protection around us, and defend us from the many evils to which we are continually exposed, and shall he yet have no tribute of praise offered up from those houses in which he maketh us to dwell in safety? How disingenuous and unreasonable must this appear to every candid and grateful mind!

3. As we receive all our family blessings from God, so we are guilty also of many family sins against him, and ought therefore to join together in the penitent confession of our sins and in deprecating the judgments which we have deserved. In a word, whatever reason there is for single persons to worship God there is the same reason for families to do it. As there are personal sins, and wants, and mercies, so there are family sins, family wants and troubles, family mercies and deliverances; and therefore it must appear highly reasonable that the members of each family should unite together in humiliation, and prayer, and thanksgiving. Those who sin together should ask forgiveness together; and those who receive mercies together should join in praising their common benefactor.

III. Consider the manifold advantages which accompany the practice of this duty, and the pernicious consequences which flow from the neglect of it.

1. The practice of this duty would be of great use to promote even your temporal and worldly interest. Your prosperity, as well as your comfort, depends very much upon the dutiful behaviour of your children, and the fidelity of your servants. This, I suppose, you will readily acknowledge. Now it is evident to a demonstration that nothing can contribute more effectually to this than the good practice which I am recommending to you. Bring the fear of God into your families, and that will secure your authority better than any thing else can do.

2. It has a manifest tendency to promote your spiritual and eternal interest. It is not only a considerable branch of that homage which you owe to God, but it may also be of great use to restrain you from sin, and to render you cautious and circumspect in every part of your behaviour. A man will be ashamed to do any thing against the honour of that God whom he so publicly acknowledges before his family; and the very desire of appearing consistent with himself in the eyes of his children or servants will hardly fail to produce at least an outward decency, and to restrain him from many of those scandalous sins which he might otherwise be in danger of committing. So that, though family worship served no higher purpose than to hedge in our practice before our household, I should even think that a considerable recommendation of it; and every wise and good man must esteem and value it upon that account. But this is one of the least of its happy effects. The practice of this duty would not only render our outward conduct cautious and decent, but would also tincture our minds deeply with a sense of God, and of divine things. It would give us greater boldness, too, in our secret approaches to the throne of grace. How can that man have any confidence or enlargement of heart in secret prayer whose conscience reproacheth him with never having honoured that God in public from whom he is now going to ask the most unmerited favours?

3. Under the influences of the divine Spirit, it is one of the most effectual means of promoting the salvation of your household. Many godly persons have ascribed their own vital impressions of religion to their living in a devout family; and many a sinner, ruined by vice and evil habits, has too justly laid a portion of the blame of his conduct on the wickedness of those with whom he dwelt. What numbers of children and servants have been lost for want of that good example which it was the duty of their parents or masters to have given them!

4. The last advantage of family religion which I shall mention is its tendency to form a holy church and people, and to propagate religion from generation to generation. The public state of religion in the world must entirely depend on the care bestowed on the cultivation of it in private families. If the nursery be neglected, how is it possible that the plantation should prosper? Such as the families are of which congregations, churches, and kingdoms are composed, such will be the flourishing or the decayed state of religion in these larger communities. Had we, who minister in the public worship of God, only to lay those stones in order in the building which parents and masters of families had previously polished, how easy and delightful would be our task! how comely and beautiful would our worshipping assemblies appear! how pure and comfortable would their communion be! But if these shall neglect to exert their proper influence, if the work of hundreds or thousands shall be left to be performed by one or two, what a tedious labour must it prove! What effect can divine truths, delivered once a week, have, unless the impression of them be afterwards kept alive by family devotion and domestic religion? It is no wonder that a tender plant should wither and die which is seldom visited or watered; and it is as little wonderful that those should continue wicked and impenitent who but once a-week come under the influence of a religious ordinance, and who neither see nor hear anything of God but when the stated season of public instruction returns. If religion die in families, how can it live in nations? Is it not an inevitable consequence that all our public devotions must in this case dwindle away into mere hypocrisy and lifeless, unavailing forms of worship?

As public instructors we must frequently insist on this point, and it will be proper to endeavour to remove the timidity and the difficulties which heads of families often feel in making a beginning. I will mention my experience in reference to this subject. I think no poor creature ever suffered more repugnance to it than myself. O what a conflict between fears and duty! How could I begin? what should I say in prayer with my family? However, after months of sinful hesitation, I at last resolved that at all events, if spared, I would commence on the first day of the new year. As the time came my agony increased. The evening and the hour approached. I could hardly have felt more at any awful calamity, so much was I terrified: but I had vowed, and I could not go back. Well we all kneeled together. I had not a thought or a word to say when I kneeled, but still, attempting to open my mouth, God gave me both thoughts and

words enough, blessed be his name ! And, even independently of the sense of obligation, I would not now neglect the continuance for all that the world could supply. This is stated as matter of encouragement. I look upon mine as an extreme case : it was an excessive weakness—in part a constitutional infirmity. It is indeed a solemn thing to call upon God ; but, as Christians, we are encouraged to recollect that he is the “ God of all grace,” and that, by approaching him in the exercise of family and social as well as private prayer, we are rendering a required service, which he will both acknowledge and bless, doing for us infinitely “ above what we can ask or think.”

Notwithstanding the importance of this Topic in point of rank, it might very safely be dismissed with the foregoing illustrations. If, however, an apology be necessary for detaining the reader's attention, I hope it will be found in my anxiety to supply, as far as possible, every thing that can contribute to his benefit ; and, as it is highly important that every preacher of the gospel should be familiar with the *grounds of our common faith*, the consideration of this subject may not be deemed much out of place under this Topic. Some remarks have already been made on detached parts of the evidences of Christianity, and several pertinent extracts have been introduced in different parts of the work. But it appeared to me that some little service might be rendered by stating, in a connected manner, some of those facts and circumstances on which the truth of the gospel is founded, and that though the facts collected may be few in number, briefly discussed, and perhaps imperfectly put together, yet my intention might be favourably received. Still I would recommend every student of divinity to pursue the subject if possible in its more extended details, by studying works of a standard and acknowledged character, which ought to form a part of every Sunday-school library, and be recommended by every preacher to the perusal of his people. The subject itself may sometimes with propriety be thrown into the form of a sermon, adopting such texts as 1 Pet. v. 12 : “ This is the true grace of God in which we stand ” (where the word *grace* is put for gospel) ; or 2 Pet. i. 16 : “ We have not followed cunningly devised fables,” &c. ; or any of like general import.

Although it is true that the nations and communities which are blessed with pure Christianity are highly advanced in intellectual improvement above those that are without it,—that our religion has been professed and honoured by the great and the good in every stage of its existence,—that many hundreds of thousands have sealed their testimony of its truth with their blood,—that a still greater number have been supported by it through all manner of trials and have died in the fullest assurance of its validity,—and that every individual who lives under its influence possesses in himself an evidence which is to him complete and irresistible, agreeably with the declaration, “ He that believeth hath the witness in himself,”—yet these considerations do not afford sufficient evidence to satisfy the sceptical part of mankind, and it is fit, both on their account and our own, that we should be prepared to give other reasons for the hope that is in us besides those which are contained in the above statements. It is not my intention to enter at large into the body of evidence on which the truth of revelation is grounded ; but I shall endeavour to show, as fully as my limits will permit, that the peculiar circumstances under which Christianity originally obtained credence were of such a kind as to exclude the possibility of forgery, that

the Christian faith, if founded on falsehood, must necessarily have perished in the age in which it originated, or rather that it never could have been received at all even by the more credulous, much less by vigilant adversaries, who were men of reason and reflection,—from which it will follow, as a necessary consequence, that the establishment of Christianity in the world, *under such circumstances*, satisfactorily proves its divine origin.

It will be admitted that no nation or country (or even any individual, in his senses) could ever be so credulous as to believe that a certain course of events occurred under their own immediate notice, when no such events had taken place; yet, on the supposition that Christianity is a forgery, this must have been precisely the fact with reference to it in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, since its first promulgators appealed to their countrymen as witnesses of the principal facts on which it is founded. Every system of imposture has its origin involved in obscurity. Such was the religion of Ephesus, Acts xix. 35. At some time or other, nobody knows how or when, the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter! Such is the origin of Ephesian worship; and this is a good sample of heathen superstition. The ancient Britons followed the Druidical religion; but who ever heard of any authentic origin which could be referred to as proving that it came from God? But the circumstantial and explicit accounts of the origin of our religion are such as to render the supposition of imposture altogether unreasonable, if not absurd; for if Christianity had been introduced in a manner different to that which is recorded, and if the events connected with the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ, to which all the first preachers appealed as well-known facts, had never really occurred, how was it possible for the falsehood to escape detection? Infidels have indeed attempted to involve the origin of Christianity in suspicion, with what degree of rationality may be estimated in the following:—Volney, a French writer, some years ago asserted that the establishment of Christianity arose out of the following circumstances:—"The great mediator and first judge [of the Jews] was expected, and his advent desired, that an end might be put to the Jewish calamities. This was so much the subject of conversation that some one was said to have seen him; a rumour of this kind was all that was wanting to establish a general certainty; and the popular report became a demonstrated fact. The imaginary being was realized; and, all the circumstances of mythological tradition being in some measure connected with this phantom, the result was an authentic history, which henceforth it was blasphemy to doubt!" Since, however, the Jews, as a people, have ever been the inveterate opponents of Christianity, is it not absolutely absurd to suppose that they were concerned in fabricating or supporting such a history?

Our own country has furnished examples of infidelity quite as illustrious. Mr. Taylor has not scrupled to assert that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ. The following is a specimen of the reasoning which he considers sufficient to overturn all the evidence derived from testimony. "The persons of whom they [the scriptures of the New Testament] treat never existed: because demoniacs, devils, ghosts, angels, hobgoblins (see Acts xix. 15), persons who had once been dead, who could walk on water, ride in the air, &c., such as Satan and Jesus Christ, are the persons of whom these scriptures treat: and that such persons never existed is demonstrable,

"1. From the utter incongruity of such figments with the established laws of sound reason.

"2. From the total absence of all historical reference to their existence.

"3. From innumerable passages of these scriptures themselves, which fully admit the merely visionary hypostasis of their fabulous hero. See Luke ix. 29; Mark ix. 2; Luke xxiv. 31; John v. 6; and innumerable other passages, in perfect accordance with the true and genuine gospels of the most primitive Christians, which taught that he was ninety-eight miles tall and twenty-four miles broad, that he was not crucified at all, that he was never born at all, that by faith only are we saved, &c., all equally indicative that Christianity had no evidence at all, but was a matter of mere conceit, fancy, or superstition, from first to last.

"That the events which they relate never happened is demonstrable (further than as a consequence of the preceding proposition) from the fact that some, many, or all of these events had been previously related of the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and more especially of the Indian idol Chrishna, whose religion, with less alteration than time and translations have made in the Jewish scriptures, may be traced in every dogma and every ceremony of the evangelical mythology."

The cause that rests on such distorted representations and such plain and palpable falsehoods for support, certainly carries internal evidence of its weakness; and no intelligent person who is at all conversant with history will be in danger of being misled by such means. But as these bold assertions, however false, may stagger the illiterate, and afford to the profane some relief from the remonstrances of conscience and the fear of future condemnation, it is proper for the preachers of the gospel to guard the weak in judgment and experience against them.

The cause at issue stands thus:—It is asserted, on the one hand, that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, or that what is ascribed to him in the New Testament is false; and that, taking off the sanction which time has conferred on the belief of it, and reducing the value derived from authority and priestly craft to its proper standard, the whole story is unworthy the belief of sensible men. On the other hand it is asserted that the religion of Christ could never have been established had not the things which are stated respecting him been true.

Now, whether there was such a person as Jesus, and what were the doctrines which he taught, are enquiries relative to facts, and, like every other question of this nature, must be determined by historic testimony. There are fables and there are real histories; and the distinction between the one and the other is generally pretty strongly marked. Whether there ever was such a person as Hercules, and whether the things ascribed to him were true or false, we decide from a reference to history; and, having ascertained that every history which bears the marks of authenticity is silent upon the subject, we conclude that Hercules was a creature of the poets and nothing more; for had the descriptions given of him by the poets corresponded with any real character, historians could not have failed to mention him. But, on the contrary, if it be enquired whether there ever was such a person as William the Conqueror, we determine in the affirmative without any fear of mistake, because his name and his deeds are recorded in the authenticated part of our English history. That he really had a bloody conflict with Harold, and overcame him at the battle of Hastings, is rendered as certain, notwithstanding the lapse of time, as though it had transpired within our own memory, upon the same principle as it will be evident to future gene-

rations that the battle of Waterloo, and the defeat of Buonaparte, &c., were real occurrences. The same rule of judgment may be applied to the solution of our present enquiry. The things which are stated of Christ and his immediate followers are such as could not have failed to excite the opposition of the Jews; they are declared not to have been done in a corner, but publicly; yet the Jews never made any attempt to deny them. It is true they disputed the divinity of Christ and denied his claims to the Messiahship; but respecting his birth, parentage, public teaching and death, there was no controversy. The gospel histories are by them uncontradicted to the present day, the divine character and mission of Jesus alone being objected to on their part. These gospel histories mark with wonderful precision the time, place, and peculiar circumstances attending the birth of Christ, informing us it was during that part of the reign of Cæsar Augustus when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria (Luke ii. 1, 2),—that it was in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod the king,—that certain wise men, being apprised of his birth* by the appearance of a miraculous star, journeyed from the east to Judea in order to worship him,—that Herod, alarmed by the apprehension of a rival, assembled the Jewish sanhedrim, and desired them to search the prophetic records for some intimation that might throw light upon the subject. The result of this enquiry was that Bethlehem was announced to be the place of the Messiah's birth; and this agreed with the fact respecting Jesus, which was brought about by an extraordinary edict by the Roman emperor, in consequence of which the mother and reputed father of Jesus were obliged to sojourn at Bethlehem at the precise period of his birth. The history tells us that Herod conceived the plan of murdering the infant, and for this purpose insidiously requested the magi to let him know the house that contained the stranger, under the pretence of desiring to worship him. Having been frustrated in this design he became more enraged, and, that he might make sure of destroying his supposed rival, sent and slew all the young children that could be found in Bethlehem and its vicinity. We are further told that, by a divine intimation, Jesus was preserved from this danger, being conducted by night into Egypt, where he remained till the death of Herod,—that Joseph then returned as directed into the land of Israel, but, hearing that Archelaus reigned in the stead of Herod, he was afraid, and eventually turned northward towards Galilee and dwelt in Nazareth.

Now, not to mention the minute agreement of the above facts with the prophetic writings received and preserved by the enemies of Christianity, I only insist that they are placed above suspicion of falsehood by the public nature of the facts themselves, and the clear and explicit manner in which the time and other circumstances are pointed out; for, if they had been false, how could such statements obtain currency when every one must have possessed the means of confuting them? and how can we account for the fact that those who thought it their interest to prevent the belief of Christianity in its first promulgation never pretended to deny them?

But the facts which I have recited from the evangelical history are still further corroborated by their conformity with profane and independent

* That a mighty deliverer was at this period very generally expected is a fact which is well attested; even Volney admits it in reference to the Jews, and builds his hypothesis upon it. But how is this fact to be accounted for except on the ground of prophetic intimation?

history. For example, the respective characters of Herod and of Archelaus are not described by the evangelists. They give merely a simple narrative of facts; yet these facts are such as to imply that the character of the men to whom they referred must have been exactly such as it is now known to have been. It is very evident, from Josephus, that the transactions which are mentioned respecting Herod were in perfect accordance with his character. He was always in fear for the stability of his throne, and anxious to pry into futurity, that he might discover whether it was likely to endure. While Herod was yet a boy, we are told by Josephus, Manahem an Essene had foretold that he was destined to be a king. "When he was actually advanced to that dignity, and in the plenitude of his power, he sent for Manahem, and enquired of him how long he should reign. Manahem did not tell him the precise period; whereupon he questioned him further, whether he should reign ten years or not? He replied, "Yes, twenty; nay, thirty years;" but he did not assign a limit to the continuance of his empire. Herod was satisfied with these answers; and giving Manahem his hand, dismissed him, and from that time never ceased to honour all the Essenes.*

With respect to Archelaus, we are only told by the evangelist that when Joseph "heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither." But, if Archelaus had not been notorious for his cruelty very soon indeed after his accession to the throne, the precipitate conduct of Joseph to avoid him is altogether unaccountable. The fact is that the very first passover after Herod's death, even before Archelaus had yet time to set out for Rome to obtain the ratification of his authority from the emperor, he was guilty of an act of outrage and bloodshed under circumstances above all others fitted to make it generally and immediately known. One of the last deeds of his father Herod had been to put to death Judas and Matthias, two persons who had instigated some young men to pull down a golden eagle which Herod had fixed over the gate of the temple, contrary, as they conceived, to the law of Moses. The hapless fate of these martyrs to the law excited great commiseration at the passover which ensued. The parties, however, who uttered their lamentations aloud were silenced by Archelaus, the new king, in the following manner:—"He sent out all the troops against them, and ordered the horsemen to prevent those who had their tents outside the temple from rendering assistance to those who were within it, and to put to death such as might escape from the foot. Three thousand men did these cavalry slay; the rest betook themselves for safety to the neighbouring mountains. Then Archelaus commanded proclamation to be made that they should all retire to their own homes. So they went away, and left the festival, out of fear lest some what worse should ensue."* Mr. Blunt, in his "Veracity of the Evangelists," commenting on this fact, observes, "We must bear in mind that, at the passover, Jews from all parts of the world were assembled, so that any event which occurred at Jerusalem, during that great feast, would be speedily reported on their return to the countries where they dwelt. Such a massacre therefore, at such a season, would at once stamp the character of Archelaus. The fear of him would naturally enough spread itself wherever a Jew was to be found; and, in fact, so well remembered was this

* Antiq. xv. 10, § 5.

† Antiq. xvii. 9, § 3.

his first essay at governing the people, that several years afterwards it was brought against him with great effect, on his appearance before Caesar at Rome. It is the more probable that this act of cruelty inspired Joseph with his dread of Archelaus because that prince could not have been much known before he came to the throne, never having had any public employment, or indeed future destination, like his half-brother Antipater, whereby he might have discovered himself to the nation at large."

To the evidence arising from this conformity (which I consider of no small weight) we may add testimonies of a more direct nature. It is well known that the early apologists of Christianity, in their disputes with the Gentiles, were accustomed to appeal to the "Acts of Pilate," which were then accessible, for the truth of the principal facts respecting the life and death of Christ. Thus Justin Martyr, in his first apology for the Christians, which was presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius and the senate of Rome about the year 140, having mentioned the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and some of its attendant circumstances, adds, "And that these things were so done you may know from the Acts made in the time of Pontius Pilate." Tertullian, in his Apology for Christianity, about the year 200, after speaking of our Saviour's crucifixion and resurrection, his appearances to his disciples, and his ascension into heaven in the sight of the same disciples, who were ordained by him to publish the gospel over the world, thus proceeds:—"Of all these things relating to Christ, Pilate himself, in his conscience already a Christian, sent an account to Tiberius, then emperor." In the same apology he thus relates the proceedings of Tiberius on receiving this information:—"There was an ancient decree that no one should be received for a deity unless he was first approved by the senate. Tiberius, in whose time the Christian name [or religion] had its rise, having received from Palestine in Syria an account of such things as manifested the truth of his [Christ's] divinity, proposed to the senate that he should be enrolled among the Roman gods, and gave his own prerogative vote in favour of the motion. But the senate," without whose consent no deification could take place, "rejected it, because the emperor himself had declined the same honour. Nevertheless, the emperor persisted in his opinion, and threatened punishment to the accusers of the Christians. Search your own commentaries (or public writings): you will there find that Nero was the first who raged with the imperial sword against this sect, when rising most at Rome." These testimonies of Justin and Tertullian are taken from public apologies for the Christian religion, which were presented either to the emperor and senate of Rome or to magistrates of public authority and great distinction in the Roman empire; and it is surely incredible that such writers would have made such appeals, especially to the very persons in whose custody these monuments were, had they not been fully satisfied of their existence and contents.

Heathen writers whose works have been preserved afford many passages in corroboration of the leading facts of the gospel history. Tacitus, without intending to serve the cause of Christianity, attests the existence of Jesus Christ, his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate, the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion, its revival a short time after his death, and rapid progress over the land of Judea and in the metropolis of the Roman empire.*

* Tacit. Ann., lib. xv., c. 44.

Celsus, who wrote in the latter part of the second century, and was one of the bitterest opponents of Christianity, speaks of the founder of the Christian religion as having lived but a very few years before his time, and mentions the principal facts of the gospel history relative to Jesus Christ, declaring that he had copied the account from the writings of the evangelists. He quotes these books and makes extracts from them, as being composed by the disciples and companions of Jesus, and under the names which they now bear. He takes notice particularly of his being born of a virgin, his being worshipped by the magi, his flight into Egypt and the slaughter of the infants, his baptism by John, his being accounted a prophet by his disciples, and his foretelling who should betray him, as well as the circumstances of his death and resurrection. He allows that Christ was considered by his disciples as a divine person, and notices all the circumstances attending his crucifixion and his appearing to his disciples afterwards. He acknowledges the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ, by which he engaged great multitudes to adhere to him as the Messiah. That these miracles were really performed he *never* disputes or denies, but ascribes them to the magic art, which, he says, Christ learned in Egypt.

To these might be added numerous other testimonies. Indeed it has been well observed that "it is not an extravagant assertion that, if the New Testament and all other Christian writings could be blotted out of existence, we have, in the unquestionably authentic writings of ancient heathens and Jews—decided enemies to the Christian religion—documents sufficient to establish *all the primary facts* on which that religion rests, namely, the life and death of Jesus at the precise period which the gospels assert, the extensive propagation of his religion at the time and in the countries which are stated in the New Testament, its reception by immense multitudes of persons who had the complete means of ascertaining whether the sensible facts on which it was founded had actually taken place or not, the moral excellence of their characters and the sacrifices of property, liberty, earthly happiness, and life itself, by which they proved the sincerity of their belief in those—not *opinions and ideas*, but—*broad facts*, of which men's eyes and ears were the witnesses. From the same source, also, we deduce the fullest evidence that the earliest enemies to Christianity, with power, money, learning, influence, and every other advantage *except truth* on their side, never attempted to deny the existence of Jesus, or the leading circumstances of his history, and they even admitted the reality of his miracles."*

I must also be permitted to observe what a striking instance of divine providence is legible in this,—I might call it a wonderful event—that the subjugation of the Jews should entwine national histories together, so that the history of Jesus and that of the Herods—nay, of the Roman empire, should coalesce, and thus bring into our possession a species of testimony attainable by no other means. We may indeed safely assert that no memorials which were ever preserved of any past events have a thousandth part of the same title to be trusted as those in the history of Jesus; and our sceptics must demolish this foundation, resting on Roman as well as Jewish records, before they can advance to blow the trumpet of victory, or destroy our hopes of that "life and immortality brought to light by the gospel."

It may be objected that no certain conclusion can be drawn in favour of

* Dr. J. P. Smith's Answer to the Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society.

Christianity from the statements of the preceding pages, because much of a fabulous character may be engrafted upon a few leading facts of history, and that this has been often done. Let us examine this point. It is admitted that the truth may, under some circumstances, be so corrupted by admixture with tradition and falsehood as to involve the enquirer in perplexity. By a long series of innovations the primitive religion of Noah degenerated into universal polytheism. By the operation of similar causes the religion of Moses became corrupted, while the external rites (the shell of truth) were retained. Thus also the Christian religion, as patronised by Constantine, degenerated into the present corrupt system of the Romish church. But the religion of Christ, as seen in the writings of the evangelists, is above suspicion of admixture. If these writers had been inclined to add any thing to the plain *facts* which came under their own notice, and to indulge an inventive faculty, a fair opportunity presented itself while Jesus was domiciliated at Nazareth. Here, in this secluded spot, no observers, no listeners, were near. Secure against contradiction, the space of twenty-five or twenty-six years might have been filled up with the marvellous; but it is worthy of remark that even the truth in reference to that space of time is not given. The history of the evangelists is altogether of a public character. Whatever Jesus said or did in the secret chamber or the recesses of Galilee is to be left out of his narrative; but if during that twenty-five years Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, and surprises the doctors of the temple by his wisdom, this event, which was capable of public corroboration, is to be historized, with all its attendant circumstances. During that long period nothing else is recorded of him but that he was subject to his mother and reputed father, and that he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

After passing over in almost total silence the events of twenty-six years, the gospel history is resumed to introduce the preaching of John the Baptist. His early history was contemporary with that of Jesus, to whom he was related. He also, as well as Jesus, passed his early life in seclusion. It is only said of him that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel." There, apart from the world, and under the tuition of heaven, he was initiated into the principles of divine wisdom, and prepared for his future course of self-denying labour. Here, as in the former case, the veil of privacy is thrown over his early history. But the moment John commences a course of public action, open to universal observation, the history of the gospel is resumed, and the events are recorded with all the needful circumstances of time, place, matter, and manner, the effects and consequences. In short, the true rules of testimony are here strictly regarded. This is laying a proper foundation, and has more meaning than the mere pomp of words; and indeed many true histories are injured for want of proper data; but here the record begins: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiphas being the high-priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness; and he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, as declared by the prophet Esaias, and great multitudes came to his baptism." Here is a multitude of witnesses. John's preaching was of the nervous kind, per-

fectly free from flattery and even somewhat severe; but he was a "burning and a shining light," and he afterwards fell a victim to his faithfulness. A corrupt court and a faithful minister of religion seldom long agree together: if faithful doctrine does not reform the court, the court will sacrifice the preacher of righteousness. We find, however, by the history that his preaching created a very strong sensation in the public mind. John had great multitudes of hearers, and was regarded as a prophet; Herod received him as such, "heard him gladly," and "did many things" enjoined by him. The Baptist's fame reached Jerusalem; the Jews there sent an embassy to him to know the import of his mission. Now I say that it was utterly impossible for an evangelist to tell this story in the face of the Jewish nation and the court of Herod if it had not been true; but, to confirm the truth of the history, many of the priests and Levites came to his baptism. About this time Jesus himself came from Nazareth to be baptized of John; and here Jesus and John recognize and acknowledge each other. Jesus receives baptism at the hands of John, and John points out Jesus as the true Messiah, to whom he was but a servant and fore-runner. "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!" John i. 29. "I preach repentance; he takes away the sins repented of." And very soon after this Jesus assumed his own ministry.

This was a very remarkable era, and stands so connected with the then state of the Jewish nation that it is necessary to notice what this state was.

However uneasy the condition of the Jewish people had been under Herod the Great, it became infinitely worse after his death. The tyranny of Archelaus had provoked such ferments and petty rebellions in the nation, that, to terminate these disorders, the Roman emperor determined to put an end to the existing government that had long been held over the country, and to govern the nation under the form of Roman provinces, to the still greater grief and disquietude of the Jews. This measure, which was carried into execution, appears to have originated, not in any premeditated design of the Roman emperor, but in the necessity of the case. The cruelties of Archelaus, and unparalleled disturbances that prevailed in every civil department of Judea, rendered the presence of a Roman governor and Roman military needful. In Josephus we every where meet with accounts of open acts of violence or secret workings of plots, conspiracies, and frauds,—the laws ineffectual or very partially observed, and very wretchedly administered,—oppression on the part of the rulers, among the people faction, discontent, sedition, tumult,—robbers infesting the very streets and most public places of resort, wandering about in arms, thirsting for blood no less than spoil, assembling in troops to the dismay of more peaceable citizens, and with difficulty put down by military force.

Such is our view of the condition of Judea as collected from Josephus. The language of the New Testament agrees with it, though in an oblique manner, for the evangelists were not, strictly speaking, historians of the times. Hence the parable of the good Samaritan—of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and falling among thieves (Luke x. 30)—of husbandmen murdering the messengers of a landowner—of an unjust judge—of a steward that made free with his master's property—of the Son of man coming as a thief in the night—of a kingdom, &c., divided against itself—of the folly of laying by treasure, as the thieves might take it, &c. And, when it is considered that all our Lord's language had reference to passing occur-

rences, we see, upon the whole, what was the state of the Jews about the time of our Lord's ministry, by which we form a chain of circumstances to prove the credibility of the gospel history.

The national pride of the Jews was wounded to the quick by the new species of control now exercised over them, and they were disposed to catch at a shadow, if it looked like a deliverer from the Roman yoke. We now arrive at the conflict between Jesus and the Jews as to the truth of his Messiahship, whether he really was one of the ordinary race of mankind or the Son of God. This conflict is frequently mentioned in the first three gospels, but is most prominent in that of John, where the disputations are recorded at considerable length. To a superficial reader these frequent collisions may seem of small importance, but they are capable of affording most essential evidence of the truth of the gospel; they form part of those *circumstances* upon which the evidence of Christianity rests. The Jews knew that the time had come as prophesied by Jacob and Daniel: Gen. xlix. 10; Dan. ix. 24. A Messiah, therefore, to meet their wishes, having but power enough, and whom they dared to follow, would have been hailed with acclamation; nor would they have examined very scrupulously his other qualifications, or his very exact correspondence with their notion of the prophecies. So far every thing was favourable for the reception of the Messiah, had he been quite of their mind. John's ministry had raised such admiration that the people mused in their hearts whether he was not the identical personage: Luke iii. 15. There were also the devout few of retired habits "waiting for the Consolation of Israel," as Simeon, Anna, &c.; so that every ear and eye was open to hear and see the great Deliverer, and John positively declared that Jesus was he. John, whom every body heard and every body received, and in "whose light they rejoiced," identified Jesus as the Messiah, even when he might have retained every degree of popularity to himself.

It must be further considered that, although there were such general expectations, yet the particular views of the expectants differed materially. The humble and the pious looked for a spiritual deliverer, agreeably to early announcement that he should "save his people from their sins." Some of these again had a mixed notion upon the subject, that the Messiah's character was both spiritual and temporal. Such opinion the twelve disciples long entertained. But the Jewish sanhedrim, and that part of the population that was under their influence, could not be satisfied with any thing less than a hero of revolution: and a hero indeed must he be that could overthrow the Roman power in the zenith of its glory. The Jews were well enough inclined to examine the prophecies for such a character, and to follow any leader who had but the shadow of a pretension to identify himself with their notions of prophecy. Perhaps they would have excused the mean birth of Jesus if they could have hoped that his sun would arise into brightness, if such improvement had been discovered as would have allowed them rationally to flock to his standard, and blow the trumpet of war; for it must be remembered that they were by no means a dastardly, pusillanimous people; they were ready enough to "buckle the shield and handle the spear." But how great was their disappointment in Jesus! He was totally of a wrong make and character, and could only be recognised at all as the Messiah by a very different class of prophecies from those which the Jewish rulers were fondly accustomed to read. Being aware of this situation of

things, he met their objections in the very opening of his ministry, by identifying himself with a prophecy of Isaiah, Luke iv. 18 : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," &c. His conduct corresponded with this spiritual character. He selected for his followers the poor fishermen of Galilee. He pronounced blessings, not upon warriors, nor upon the rich and the noble, but upon the humble and meek. He did not, in any instance, wait upon any of the higher classes of society, nor attempt to explain the apparent discrepancy. This was in the eyes of the ruling party a very galling offence, and they were even now ready to say, as they afterwards did, "Away with such a fellow from the earth !" Here we see the popular notion running in one direction and the Saviour's heavenly intentions in another. Meet they could not. If this people could have been brought to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, instead of the recovery of their ancient glory, all would have been right ; but, as things were, a reconciliation of views was impossible.

Now did such a state of things and of public opinion correspond with such a character as Jesus, when he began his ministry ? Not in the least ; and it is by this very circumstance that the New Testament stands clear of the charge of originating in human invention : for had the New Testament related a course of events all running in one channel, wherein there was no eye of jealousy to suspect or hand of opposition raised, the men of this age might have had some plausible ground for incredulity, though it might be true notwithstanding such amicable accordances ; but as things stood at that time no such plausible ground is left them. The Jews in their disappointed rage quarrelled even with the benevolence of Jesus and the benefits he conferred upon the sick, the lame, and the blind. They treated rudely and impudently the most demonstrative proofs of his divinity and most convincing arguments that he was the Messiah, and threw dirt on all his works and character : "He hath a devil, why do you hear him ?" while every accession of popularity which his miracles and doctrines gained to him brought a more than equal accession of malignity in the rulers, which grew to such a pitch that Nicodemus, a noble example of a better disposition, dared not consult with Jesus respecting his mission but under the veil of night.

It has often been remarked that the cause of truth always obtains strength by opposition, and it is to mark that opposition that I so much insist upon this part of the history. The common people in the country, it appears, were so enamoured with Jesus that they resolved to make him king, which of course was resisted ; and in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem his popularity became so great, by the resurrection of Lazarus, that the sanhedrim were assembled to deliberate upon it. Something, say they, must immediately be done. "What do we !" or what shall we do ? "for this man does many miracles" to confirm his doctrines and increase his adherents ; and though he does not appear to possess power enough to save us from the Romans, or inclination prompt enough to attempt our deliverance, yet his popularity and influence are quite enough to provoke them to greater hostility. "If we let him alone," it is not improbable that we may be banished to some remote region, for the Romans may be induced to "take away both our place and nation." Under these apprehensions they meditated the death of Jesus, but dared not attempt it ; "for they feared the people," a full proof of the turbulent state of the times : they were rulers in name only.

One would think that these wise men, seeing the proofs of a heavenly mission daily disclosing themselves in the character and person of Jesus, might have given the subject of his Messiahship a closer examination; but they were entangled in their own counsels, and they wanted what it was impossible to obtain—a Messiah to their own mind. Jesus did nothing for them, as they thought, but rather diminished than increased their popularity with the people. Their authority seemed to totter and shake to the very foundation; and they were in danger of being brought into contempt. They had ecclesiastical power still in their hands, though the Romans had the civil; but the doctrines of Jesus tended to subvert even this residue. These pointed to a spiritual rather than a worldly or carnal economy, and tended to superinduce a new order of things over that of Moses, by which they held all their honours and all their authority.*

We have seen that the person and character of Jesus form part of a regular history, having time, place, and circumstances to substantiate every thing; that this history is not purely Jewish, but that it is interwoven with more general historical and well-known facts, in all which imposture was impossible. We have seen that John the Baptist, a man universally acknowledged, bears testimony to Christ as the Messiah, and that, although Jesus was rejected in that character by the higher classes of the Jews, yet his miracles and doctrines were too conspicuous for privacy and concealment, and his popularity increased,—that he assumed to himself the character of the Saviour of the world,—and, what is very material, that every point he asserted was *strongly opposed and severely canvassed and scrutinized*, but not subverted. This is all that we are solicitous about; for here it is demonstratively proved that the religion of Jesus was not a forgery. It was established in the face of a mighty opposition. It was not like the religion of the Koran, which was prepared in privacy and then propagated publicly and by the sword, but bore a near resemblance to the religion of Moses, which grew out of the circumstances and historical facts of the Israelitish people, was conducted through the opposition of enemies, and ended in the final triumph over them.

It is also worthy of remark that, in passing over the various incidents of New Testament history, we cannot but see the utmost impartiality of representation and faithfulness of record. The evangelists relate their facts with the simplicity of children, and appear not to suspect that they could or would, in future ages, be discredited. All the weaknesses and faults of the disciples are set down in full dimensions, as well as the faults of their adversaries. Though the different evangelists take different views of things, yet in no instance does the account of one of them contradict that of the other; but, on the contrary, when closely examined and put together, they afford mutual corroboration. In delineation of character, how exactly true to nature! That of the Jews—their inveterate prejudices, their superstitions, their unbelief of well-authenticated truth, and their extraordinary credulity of the most silly stories and traditions. This representation remains true of that people

* The Jews could not much mistake Christ's words. The subversion of the Mosaic institutions was pretty plainly intimated in the sentence, "The law and the prophets prophesied until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached." This was a bold declaration. It was saying, in effect, You have obeyed the ceremonies of the law, and you have honoured the admonitions of the prophets, for 1500 years; henceforth a new authority is to be paramount,

to the present day: the high spirit of their character is indeed broken down by their overthrow, but in all the particulars just named any person can ascertain the close resemblance of their present character with that which the evangelists have drawn. Nay, the general character of human nature itself, in all its diversified feelings, and in persons of all ranks, cannot be more correctly described. Here we see how prejudices are sometimes subdued by affliction, in a ruler of a synagogue supplicating our Lord's compassion in favour of his diseased daughter. We see, on the contrary, that minds unsubdued by affliction, but nurtured in riches, are the most inimical to the reception of truth, while the poor and the afflicted humbly seek relief. And are not the same things manifest in the present day? We see the same versatility now every day that is marked in the gospels, in the multitude hailing Christ with hosannas one day and almost the next vociferating against him. In the treachery and baseness of Judas we see a picture of the same kind in a man's enemies being too often those of his own house. The like divisions in families on religious accounts, the same jealousies and suspicions against any member of a family who is more conscientious than the others, the same unfeeling behaviour towards an erring brother as the righteous Pharisees had against the sinners, is now found to exist. The same fondness for the chief seats in the synagogues which called forth the censure of our Lord is still apparent. The same ingratitude which we find in the ten restored lepers, only one of whom returned to give thanks, now exists in human nature towards God.

In the character of Jesus we see what the world never read of before, one that is absolutely perfect. Imagination never formed the conception of such a character, and its portraiture is such as could never have been exhibited had not the image of perfection been before the eyes of the writers. Benevolence everywhere appears as the ruling principle of all his actions, truth and faithfulness were the law of his lips with whomsoever he came in contact, and heavenly wisdom guided his decisions. His axioms of truth contain the soundest philosophy; while his penetration into the secrets of the heart of those that appeared before him could not be human.

We must also notice the dignity and ease with which Jesus spoke on the most heavenly and sublime things, how admirably he rendered them familiar by inimitable parables and other forms of speech, his perfect command of himself upon all occasions, and his affability and condescension; so that it was truly said of him, "never man spake like this man."

The particular line of argument adopted in the foregoing pages may be pursued to a considerable length, and is capable of affording satisfaction to every unprejudiced enquirer respecting the origin of Christianity; but I flatter myself I shall perform a more acceptable service by pointing out to the student all the separate points of argument on which the advocates of Christianity have placed their chief confidence, adding only a few hints, and a reference to the authors from whom further instruction is to be derived.

I. In stating the evidence for the truth of Christianity, there is nothing more worthy of consideration than the *authenticity* of the books of the New Testament. This is the foundation on which all other arguments rest; and, if this be solid, the Christian religion is fully established. The proofs for the authenticity of the New Testament have this peculiar advantage, that they are plain and simple, and involve no metaphysical subtleties. Every man who can distinguish truth from falsehood must see their force; and if

there be any so blinded by prejudice, or corrupted by licentiousness, as to attempt by sophistry to elude them, their sophistry will be easily detected by every man of common understanding who has read the historical evidence with candour and attention.

We receive the books of the New Testament as the genuine works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, &c., for the same reason that we receive the writings of Zenophon, Polybius, Plutarch, Cæsar, and Livy. We have the uninterrupted testimony of all ages, and we have no reason to suspect imposition. This argument is much stronger when applied to the books of the New Testament than when applied to any other writings; for they were addressed to large societies, were often read in their presence, and were acknowledged by them to be the writings of the apostles; whereas the most eminent profane writings which still remain were addressed only to individuals, or to no persons at all, and we have no authority to affirm that they were ever read in public; on the contrary, we know that a liberal education was uncommon, books were scarce, and the knowledge of them was confined to a few individuals in every nation. The New Testament was read over three quarters of the world, while profane writers were limited to one nation or to one country. An uninterrupted succession of writers from the apostolic ages to the present time quote the sacred writings, or make allusions to them; and these quotations and allusions are made, not only by friends, but by enemies. This cannot be asserted of even the best classic authors. And it is highly probable that the translations of the New Testament were made as early as the second century, and in a century or two afterwards they became very numerous. After this period it was impossible to forge new writings, or to corrupt the sacred text, unless we can suppose that men of different nations, of different sentiments and different languages, and often exceedingly hostile to one another, should all agree in one forgery. If we deny the authenticity of the New Testament, we may with a thousand times more propriety reject all the other writings in the world; we may even throw aside human testimony itself. Those who wish to see this subject fully investigated must consult Taylor's *Process of Historical Proof*, and the valuable work of Michaelis.

I may here just observe that the reasons which may induce a critic to suspect the authenticity of a work cannot at all apply to the New Testament. 1. It cannot be shown that its authenticity was doubted in the period in which it first appeared. 2. No ancient accounts are on record from which we may conclude it to be spurious. 3. No considerable period elapsed after the death of the apostles in which the New Testament was unknown; on the contrary, it is mentioned by their very contemporaries, and the accounts of it in the second century are exceedingly numerous. 4. No argument can be brought in its disfavour from the nature of the style, it being exactly such as might be expected from the apostles—not Attic but Jewish Greek. 5. No facts are recorded which happened after their death. 6. No doctrines are maintained which contradict the known tenets of the authors, since, besides the New Testament, no writings of the apostles exist. But, to the honour of the New Testament be it spoken, it contains numerous contradictions to the tenets and doctrines of the fathers in the second and third centuries, whose morality was different from that of the gospel, which recommends fortitude and submission to unavoidable evils, but not that enthusiastic ardour for martyrdom for which those centuries were dis-

tinguished. It also alludes to ceremonies which in the following ages were either in disuse or totally unknown. All these circumstances infallibly demonstrate that the New Testament is not a production of either of those centuries.

The positive proofs of the authenticity of the New Testament are as follows :—

1. *The impossibility of forgery*, arising from the nature of the thing itself. This has been considered in the preceding observations on the subject, in which I have shown that if the writings of the evangelists had been forged (and the same will apply to the whole of the New Testament), the Jews could not have failed to detect the imposture. I may here ask, Is there a single instance on record where a few individuals have imposed a history upon the world against the testimony of a whole nation? Would the inhabitants of Palestine have received the gospels if they had not had sufficient evidence that Jesus Christ really appeared among them, and performed the miracles ascribed to him? Or would the churches of Rome or of Corinth have acknowledged the epistles addressed to them as the genuine works of Paul, if Paul had never preached among them? We might as well think to prove that the history of the Reformation is the invention of historians, and that no revolution happened in Great Britain during the seventeenth century.

2. The uninterrupted chain of evidence arising from *the testimony of ancient writers*—Christians, Jews, and heathens—fully establishes the authenticity of the New Testament. The history of the Christian church corroborated by profane history, proves that the several books of the New Testament were the genuine productions of the persons whose names they respectively bear,—that they were received, quoted, and enforced by the next age, and in succession to every age since that time,—that copies of these scriptures were taken, and translated into many languages, all the translations agreeing in substance with the original (for, however corrupt the church of Rome became, their copy of the scriptures essentially agrees with the earliest copies in various languages),—that the true Christian character survived the most terrible persecutions,—that, in the darkest parts of the middle ages, the Waldenses and Albigenses (see Jones's History of the Christian Church) preserved entire the Christian church and doctrine till the time of the reformation in Germany, England, &c. See Jones's new and full Method of establishing the Canon of the New Testament.

3. We may remark particularly *the testimony of various sects of heretics and also of apostates from Christianity*, who would certainly have discovered the deception if any had been practised, but who never once called in question the authenticity of the books of the New Testament.

4. The *internal evidences* of authenticity which arise out of the nature of the style, and the coincidence of the New Testament with the history of the times. See Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, and Blunt's *Credibility of the Evangelists*.

II. The authenticity of the books of the New Testament being ascertained, the evidence from *miracles* may be adduced as a full and sufficient proof that the doctrines which they were wrought to confirm came from God, who at first gave to creation its laws, and who alone could dispense with the operation of those laws. So thought Moses when, in the matter of Korah, he said to the Israelites, "If these men die the common death

of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me." So thought Elijah when he said, "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant;"—and the people before whom he spoke were of the same opinion; for, when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, they said, "The Lord he is the God." So thought our Saviour when he said, "The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness of me;" and, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

What reason have we to believe Jesus speaking in the gospel, and to disbelieve Mahomet speaking in the Koran? Both of them lay claim to a divine commission; and yet we receive words of the one as a revelation from God, and we reject the words of the other as an imposture of man. The reason is evident: Jesus established his pretensions, not by alleging any secret communication with the Deity, but by working numerous and indubitable miracles in the presence of thousands, and which the most bitter and watchful of his enemies could not disallow; but Mahomet wrought no miracles at all.

Now, though we have not ourselves witnessed the miracles which were wrought, yet we know that the gospel was at first received upon this ground, as appeals to the senses,* and the apostles allude frequently in their epistles to the gift of miracles which they had communicated to the Christian converts by the imposition of hands, in confirmation of the doctrine delivered in their speeches and writings, and sometimes to miracles which they themselves had performed. The case is here entirely different from that of an historian who relates extraordinary events in the course of his narrative, since either credulity or an actual intention to deceive may induce him to describe as true a series of falsehoods respecting a foreign land or distant period. Even to the evangelists might an adversary to the Christian religion make this objection: but to write to persons with whom we stand in the nearest connexion—"I have not only performed miracles in your presence, but have likewise communicated to you the same extraordinary endowment"—to write in this manner if nothing of the kind had ever happened, would not only require an incredible degree of effrontery, but would necessarily expose the writer to the utmost ridicule, and, by giving his adversaries the fairest opportunity to detect his imposture, would ruin the cause which he attempted to support.

The several epistles of Paul are addressed to different communities by whom the gospel had very recently been received. In these epistles he appeals to the miracles which he had performed, and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which he had communicated. Now is it possible, without forfeiting all pretensions to common sense, to imagine that, in writing to communities which had been lately established, he could speak of miracles performed, and gifts of the Holy Ghost communicated, if no members of these societies had seen the one or received the other? To suppose that an impostor could write such epistles as these, and yet maintain his authority, implies ignorance and stupidity hardly to be believed. Credulous as the Christians have been in later ages, and even so early as the third century, no less severe were they in their enquiries, and guarded against deception, at the introduction of Christianity. This character is given them even by Lucian, a writer of the second century, who vented his satire, not only against certain Christians who had supplied Peregrinus with the means of

* Vide Jorton on John v. 36.

subsistence, but also against heathen oracles and pretended wonders. He relates of his impostor (Pseudomantis) that he attempted nothing supernatural in the presence of the Christians and Epicureans.

In this argument, it has been justly observed, it is needless to waste time in proving that those miracles, as they are represented in the writings of the New Testament, were of such a nature and performed before so many witnesses that no imposition could possibly be practised on the senses of those who affirm that they were present. From every page of the gospels this is so evident that the philosophical adversaries of the Christian faith never suppose the apostles to have been themselves deceived, but boldly accuse them of bearing false witness. But, if this accusation be well founded, their testimony itself is as great a miracle, or, in other words, as real a deviation from the laws of nature, as any which they record of themselves or of their master. When they sat down to fabricate their pretended revelation, and to contrive a series of miracles to which they were all to appeal for its truth, it is plain, since they proved successful in their daring enterprise, that they must have clearly foreseen every possible circumstance in which they could be placed, and have prepared consistent answers to every question that could be put to them by their most inveterate and most enlightened enemies, by the statesman, the lawyer, the philosopher, and the priest. That such foreknowledge as this would have been miraculous will not surely be denied, since it forms the very attribute which we find it most difficult to allow even to God himself. It is not, however, the only miracle which this supposition would compel us to admit. The very resolution of the apostles to propagate the belief of false miracles, in support of *such* a religion as that which is taught in the New Testament, would have been as wide a deviation from the laws of nature, and therefore as great a miracle, as the mind of man has ever conceived. When they formed this design, either they must have hoped to succeed or they must have been convinced that they should fail in their undertaking; and in either case they chose evil, and what they knew to be unmixed evil, for its own sake! They could not, if they foresaw that they should fail, look for anything but that contempt, disgrace, and persecution, which were then the inevitable consequences of an unsuccessful endeavour to overthrow the established religion. Nor would their prospects be brighter on the supposition of their success. As they knew themselves to be false witnesses, and impious deceivers, they could have no hope beyond the grave; and, by determining to oppose all the religious systems, superstitions, and prejudices of the age in which they lived, they wilfully exposed themselves to inevitable misery in the present life, to insult and imprisonment, to stripes and death. Nor can it be alleged that they might look forward to power and affluence when they should through sufferings have converted their countrymen; for so desirous were they of obtaining nothing but misery, as the end of their mission, that they made their own persecution a test of the truth of their doctrines. They introduced the Master, from whom they professed to have received those doctrines as telling them that they were sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves," that they should be "delivered up to councils, and scourged in synagogues, that they should be hated of all men for his name's sake," that "the brother should deliver up the brother to death and the father the child," and that "he who took not up his cross and followed him was not worthy of him." The very system of religion, therefore, which they invented, and resolved to impose upon mankind, was so contrived that

the worldly prosperity of its first preachers, and even their exemption from persecution, was incompatible with its success. Had these clear predictions of the author of that religion under whom the apostles and evangelists acted only as ministers not been verified, all mankind must have instantly perceived that their claim to inspiration was groundless, and that Christianity was a scandalous and impudent imposture. All this the apostles could not but foresee when they formed their plan for deluding the world. Hence it follows that, when they resolved to support their pretended revelation by an appeal to forged miracles, they wilfully, and with their eyes open, exposed themselves to inevitable misery, whether they should succeed or fail in their enterprise, and that they concerted their measures in such a manner as not to admit a possibility of recompence to themselves, either in this life or in that which is to come. But if there be a law of nature concerning the reality of which we have better evidence than we have concerning that of others it is "that no man can choose misery for its own sake," or make the acquisition of it the ultimate end of all his pursuits. The existence of other laws of nature we know by testimony and our own observation of the regularity of their effects. The existence of this law is made known to us, not only by these means, but also by the still clearer and more conclusive evidence of every man's own consciousness. Thus, then, do miracles force themselves upon our assent in every possible view which we can take of this interesting subject.

The independent testimony of Paul, and his extraordinary conversion and ministry, have been very ably exhibited, as affording additional evidence, by Lord Lyttelton. If it could be supposed that the evangelists were confederated together for the purpose of fabricating the gospel, yet how came Paul, without any communication with them, to stop, in the midst of his efforts for persecuting the Christians, to turn round and preach the "faith which once he destroyed," and to imbibe the same spirit and willingly expose himself to the same sufferings as the other disciples, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ?^{*}

III. The argument from *prophecy* is of great importance, and can be fully established on evidence distinct from the testimony of its supporters. Whoever compares the language of prophecy in the Old Testament with the events recorded in the New cannot but admit that there is a real correspondence between them; and this correspondence is so close and circumstantial that some of the disciples of infidelity have been driven to the easily refuted assertion that the prophecies were written after the events had taken place. Had the prophetic writings of the Old Testament been under the control of the Christians, the argument for their antiquity would not have been so completely satisfactory as it now is. The Jews have always been influenced by feelings of the strongest hostility to Christianity; they are galled incessantly by the triumphant tone in which Christians appeal to their prophecies; and can it be supposed, that, notwithstanding all this, they have actually combined with Christians to fabricate these writings and to palm them upon the world?

But it is necessary to recur to two or three remarkable predictions of Jesus Christ himself, the minute fulfilment of which demonstrates that they

* See the Supplementary Dissertation on the Miracles of our Lord and his Apostles, inserted by Bishop Gleig in his new edition of Stackhouse's History of the Bible. Also Campbell on Miracles; and Dr. Collyer's Lectures on the same subject.

could only proceed from the spirit of prophecy—the inspiration of the Almighty. The first which I shall mention is the announcement or prophecy respecting himself. This is intimated figuratively and plainly—figuratively in the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen (Luke xx. 9, &c., and John xii. 24, and also ver. 32), plainly in Matt. xvi. 21, in Luke xviii. 31, &c. These plain expressions, being without the least figure, required a literal fulfilment as to his death, the manner, means, &c., and as to his resurrection at a precise time, the third day, which was to remove for ever the ignominy of the cross. His personal revival was in effect the invigorated and prolific revival of his cause, John xii. 24 ; Ps. lxxii. 16. If the Jews had anything to object against this representation, why was it not objected on the day of Pentecost, when Peter boldly declared the resurrection of Christ and when it was reiterated before the Jewish council, Acts iv. ? Were they not still as a stone ? and did not their profound silence at such a time demonstrate the fact ? The announcement of Jesus, that he, “having ascended far above all heavens,” would send his Holy Spirit upon his disciples soon after his death (John xvi. 7), is another prediction which was fulfilled in a remarkable manner on the day of Pentecost. This effusion of the Spirit was witnessed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and those devout Jews who assembled at the feast, Acts vi. 13. Here was surely publicity enough.

If, however, these prescient intimations received such evident demonstration of their truth before friends, strangers, and enemies—the humble and the elevated characters of the Jewish nation—we shall refer with equal confidence to the announcement of Jesus Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. This is covertly hinted at by Jesus in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21 : “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor yet at *Jerusalem* shall you worship the Father.” In another place it is declared in a manner that cannot be mistaken : “As Jesus went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here. And Jesus answering said, Seest thou these great buildings ? There *shall not be one stone left upon another* that shall not be cast down,” Mark xiii. 2. But in another passage it takes the form of a solemn prediction of the judgment of heaven upon the city : “And, when he (Jesus) had come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thy eyes. For the days shall come that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the day of thy visitation,” Luke xix. 41, &c. Now we know, from Josephus, that about forty years afterwards Jerusalem was destroyed under circumstances unusually calamitous,—that the temple, in particular, was overthrown, in spite of the endeavours of the conqueror himself to preserve it standing,—and that the Christians were preserved from the general calamity in consequence of their complying with the directions of Christ which referred to this event : Matt. xxiv. 15—18. But nothing could well appear more improbable than the fulfilment of this prophecy at the time when it was uttered. The Jews were at this time resolved to avoid an open rebellion, well knowing the greatness of their danger, and submitted to the oppressions of their governors in the hope of obtaining redress from the court

of Rome. The threatened destruction of Jerusalem was opposed to all their national prejudices. They confidently relied upon divine protection. The idea of being deserted by that care, and seeing their city in the hands of foreigners, was not more shocking to their pride than contradictory to their faith. Such an event was treated by their writers, not as a danger, or a disgrace, or a calamity, but as an *abomination* (Dan. xi. 31 ; Matt. xxiv. 15) ; and we know from history that when the catastrophe really happened they obstinately shut their eyes to the nearness and extent of the danger ; they would not believe that Gentile hands would ever be suffered to pollute the sanctuary which they so highly revered, and expected to the last that a divine interposition would preserve their temple, at the least, from the general overthrow. The circumstance which eventually gave birth to their misfortunes was so trivial in itself, that, independently of its consequences, it would not have deserved to be recorded. In a narrow entrance to a synagogue in Cæsarea some person had made an offering of birds, merely with a view to irritate the Jews. The insult excited their indignation and occasioned the shedding of blood. This seemingly trivial circumstance, ordained by him without whose permission a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, gave rise to a bloody war, which ended in the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy by the total destruction of Jerusalem and the dreadful massacre of its inhabitants. Florus, who was then procurator of Judea, converted this private quarrel into public hostilities, and compelled the Jewish nation to rebel, contrary to its wish and resolution, to avoid what the Jews had threatened, an impeachment before the Roman emperor for his excessive cruelties. But, even after this rebellion had broken out, the destruction of the temple was a very improbable event. It was not the practice of the Romans to destroy the magnificent edifices of the nations which they subdued ; and, of all the Roman generals, none was more unlikely to demolish so ancient and august a building than Titus Vespasian.

Many prophecies have been fulfilled in more recent times, and some are even now fulfilling, in the present spread of the gospel among heathen nations. Others remain yet to be fulfilled ; so that in the evidence of prophecy we have a rising barrier, which may receive from time to time a new accumulation to the materials which form it.*

IV. The acknowledged *excellency of the morals inculcated in the gospel*, together with its peculiar *adaptation to the condition of man*, and its actual efficiency in forming the character and disposition of those who receive it, furnish another branch of evidence which must satisfy every unprejudiced enquirer conversant with the defective character and absolute insufficiency of every system which human philosophy has devised, that Christianity is a revelation from God. It is only necessary for friend or enemy to see this adaptation of Christianity to its professed design in order to be satisfied that "this is the true grace of God in which we stand." And what is our gospel ? What does it teach ? It assumes and teaches the universal ruin of all mankind by the fall, and provides for the restoration of all that receive its testimony in a manner that does complete honour to all the divine attributes and perfections, by a Mediator at once divine and human, by his finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness, by placing the applicatory part of salvation in the hands of

* See Sherlock on the Use and Intent of Prophecy—Bishop Newton on the Prophecies—Maclaurin on the Prophecies respecting the Messiah—and Paley's Evidences, Part ii. [See also the Works of Davison and Fairbairn on Prophecy.]

the Holy Spirit, to renew the heart, to cleanse from sin, to sanctify the life, to enlighten the understanding, to gain the will, to engage the affections, to implant all virtues in the heart, to excite to every good work ; so that grace may reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life.

It may excite our astonishment that a scheme so honourable to Jehovah, and so safe and complete for man, did not immediately obtain the assent of at least all the intelligent portion of those to whom it was made known, and that notwithstanding the mighty signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, with which it was accompanied in its early career, Christianity still met with the most determined opposition, that it had to attest its authority in the blood of hundreds and thousands of martyrs, to work its way in the hearts of men as the leaven works in the meal, or by way of moral influence, and to prove itself true by its purifying nature and mighty energy, pulling down strong holds, overcoming principalities and powers, eradicating deep rooted prejudices and false principles, and bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. It may also excite our astonishment that a scheme so divine, and which has been in operation more than eighteen hundred years, should yet be understood and savingly received by so few, and that hostility should exist even to the present day. But such astonishment is improper, and shows that even we know the scriptures only in part. Our dear Lord marked with divine precision the success which should attend his gospel ; he foretold that it would be met by persecution, and that it would be the innocent cause of painful divisions in communities and families ; he also foretold the abuses that would be introduced, the corruptions that would grow up in his church, the daring innovators who should arise to sow tares in his field ; he declared that the effects of gospel doctrines would be various in various characters, as exemplified by the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii.), that seasons of persecution would induce the apostacy of many, and that times of prosperity would produce hypocrites, that the love of many even of his own people should wax cold, that some would slumber and others sleep, while others would shine as the light in his spiritual kingdom. He gave the most serious cautions upon these points, and the most exact premonitions of what would happen in futurity. But with the intimation of these things he blended some other things of a more agreeable nature, that he would be with his people "to the end of the world," that, notwithstanding the expected opposition, his gospel should be preached and spread throughout all nations, and that the gates of hell should not be able to prevail against his cause and kingdom. If we carefully observe these representations we must perceive that they perfectly concur with what we daily see ; so that this very state of things (the most unfavourable and discouraging, viewing the painful side of the statement, and which no human imagination could have considered to result from a system of religion so excellent in itself), so far from shaking our faith in the gospel, affords an accession of evidence beyond what would have been given under another order of things. If the gospel had prevailed more easily over the constitution of corrupt nature, we might be led to conclude either that human nature was not so perverse as it is represented, or that the prophecies of Jesus had not been realized. But now every thing occurs as expected : the conflict between light and darkness still exists ; and in the midst of this conflict we see, by means of the excellency of the gospel, a character arise to view before but imperfectly known to the world—a character formed after the

pattern of Christ, by purity of heart, humility in the life, a constant reverence of the divine Being, and submission to his will—a character emptied and purged from selfishness, and full of love to all mankind, under injuries returning good for evil, having a mind irradiated with truth, affections set on heavenly things, counting time by its possibilities for usefulness, estimating happiness by the power possessed to diffuse it, breathing, thirsting for immortality, yet unwilling to leave anything undone here behind him. Whatever charities can grow upon human nature, they are cherished; whatever talents heaven imparts, they are exercised. On this part of the subject, I make no apology for quoting the concession of a celebrated infidel, J. J. Rousseau, whose immoralities accorded with his principles, but who had not entirely extinguished in his bosom every spark of truth and justice :—

“The gospel [by which term he intends the whole narrative of the actions and discourses of Jesus, as comprised in the writings of the four evangelists], that divine book, the only one necessary to a Christian, and the most useful of all to the man who may not be one, only requires reflection upon it to impress the mind with love for its author, and resolution to fulfil his precepts. Virtue never spoke in gentler terms; the profoundest wisdom was never uttered with greater energy or more simplicity. It is impossible to rise from the reading of it without a feeling of moral improvement. Look at the books of the philosophers; with all their pomp how little they are compared with this!—Shall we say that the history of the gospel is a pure fiction? This is not the style of fiction; and the history of Socrates, which nobody doubts, rests upon less evidence than that of Jesus Christ. And, after all, this is but shifting the difficulty, not answering it. The supposition that several persons had united to fabricate this book is more inconceivable than that one person should have supplied the subject of it. The spirit which it breathes, the morality which it inculcates, could never have been the invention of Jewish authors; and the gospel possesses characters of truth so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing object than the hero.”

Where then and what is the contempt of infidels, the scorn of the proud, and the neglect of a cold and unfeeling world? Where will such characters hide their shame? what shall cover the confusion that will burst upon them in the day of discovery? Talk of reason, the elevation of philosophy, the knowledge of the world! these are but the fancied dreams of a distempered mind, which, “like the baseless fabric of a vision,” shall but mock the return of light and the reflection of the morning; but “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.”*

V. The Jews of the present day are also a living evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Our religion is founded on the abrogation of theirs (Rom. xi. 20); and, though the Jews could be supposed right and the Christians wrong, yet the fact remains the same; the origin of Christianity stands undisputed. The Jews never denied the facts of the gospel; they only denied the true messiahship of Jesus. Very lately a respectable and sensible Jew addressed the then Secretary of State (Mr. Peel) to ask for the removal of their disabilities. He pleads that they have the same belief of Moses and the prophets that Jesus professed, that he was *their brother*, but that they put him to death for attempting to found a new religion.

* See Hill's Lectures on the Internal Evidences of Christianity; and Erskine's Essay on the same.

Having thus briefly adverted to the several branches of evidence which I consider legitimate and conclusive, I take my leave of the subject in the words of Dr. Chalmers, in his admirable work on the Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation : "The great strength of the Christian argument lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the apostles because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have persevered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood ; it is impossible that they could have imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers ; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and so determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the apostles is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the apostles is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the enquiry we never wander from that sure though humble path which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophizing. We never cast off the authority of those maxims which have been found in every other department of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedence of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

"It appears to us that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. You seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not, in general, upon the weight or the nature of human testimony that they venture to pronounce on the credibility of the Christian revelation. It is on the character of that revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity which they think disparaging to the attributes of God, and not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures. Rousseau expresses [as we have seen] his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony, which was so strong that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient in his mind, to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doctrines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that theism which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him what every mind of genius and sensibility es-

seems to be the highest of all luxuries. It would have destroyed a system which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and marred the gracefulness of that fine, intellectual picture on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

"In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct of man in given circumstances, we must pass a favourable sentence upon the testimony of the apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, Shall we admit the testimony of the apostles upon the application of principles founded on observation, and as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or shall we reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature as is our experience of the counsels of Heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and, when put by the side of the Christian argument, it appears as crude and unphilosophical as do the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen, when set in opposition to the rigour, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

"The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; and we count it hard, while in every other department of enquiry a respect for truth is found sufficient to suppress the appetite for system-building, that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain infected with a spirit so exploded and so unphilosophical, and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation so current among the deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times."

[On the general subject of this chapter, and as having special reference to the new form of infidelity developed by Strauss, we would recommend to the student out of the mass of books—The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels, by Dr. W. H. Mill; The Age and Christianity, by Dr. Robert Vaughan; Westcott's Introduction to the Gospels; Davidson's Introduction to the New Testament; Dr. Beard's Voices of the Church; Norton's Genuineness of the Gospels; Isaac Taylor's Restoration of Belief, and the Eclipse of Faith, and Defence of the Eclipse, by Henry Rogers, Esq., as well as his admirable Greyson Letters. The various Quarterlies also contain admirable articles on these questions in their philosophical and critical aspects as they arise. In this department, the *British Quarterly* holds, and has held, in our opinion, the first rank.]

LECTURE XXIV.

TOPIC XX.

REMARK THE GOOD AND BAD IN EXPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS.

"This Topic," Mons. Claude observes, "is of very great use in explaining the histories recorded in the gospel, where you will frequently find actions and words which may be called *mixed*, because, in general, they proceed from some good principles, and, in particular, they have a good deal of weakness and infirmity in them." If you explain Matt. xvi. 22, 'Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee,' you may observe what there is good, and what bad, in this expression of St. Peter. 1. You see herein his *love* to his master; for his not being able to bear the discourse of Jesus Christ concerning his sufferings at Jerusalem could only proceed from his ardent affection to him. 2. Herein appears not that cold and lukewarm regard which most men have for one another, but a most *lively affection*, interesting him for his master, an affection full of tenderness, which could not even bear to hear a word, or entertain a thought, about the death of Jesus Christ. 3. You may observe an *honest freedom*, which put him upon freely addressing Jesus Christ himself, using that familiar access which his condescension allowed his disciples, without a mixture of mean and despicable timidity. 4. You see, in fine, a strong *faith* in his master's power, as by addressing him he seems persuaded that it depended only on himself to suffer or not to suffer: 'Lord, be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee.' Now all these are *good* dispositions. Here follow the *bad* ones. 1. Peter discovers gross *ignorance* of the ways of divine wisdom in sending Jesus Christ into the world, for he does not seem yet to know that Jesus Christ must needs suffer; and with this ignorance the Lord reproaches him in the next verse: 'Thou savourest not the things which are of God, but those which are of men.' 2. His love to his master had something merely human and *carnal* in it, since he only considered the preservation of his temporal life, and concerned himself only about his body, instead of elevating his mind to that superior glory of Jesus Christ which was to follow his sufferings, or considering the great work of man's salvation, to perform which he came into the world. 3. You may also remark a troublesome and criminal *boldness*. He means to be wiser than Jesus Christ. 'Peter took him,' says the Evangelist, 'and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee.' Rash attempt! as if Peter were called into the council of God and Jesus Christ his Son, to give his opinion concerning this grand affair. 4. It even seems as if Peter, hearing Christ speak of his sufferings, imagined this discourse proceeded only from his fear of death, and from a mean timidity; for he aims to encourage and comfort him as we do persons whose fears exceed the bounds of reason: 'Lord,' says he, 'be it far from thee this shall not be unto thee;' as if he had said, 'Do not afflict yourself; your apprehensions of death are groundless; nothing of this kind is likely to happen to you.'

The excellences and failings which may be mixed in human character and the compound of truth and error in human sentiment, open to us a wide field of profitable observation and of comment; and it must be admitted

that the language of scripture furnishes numerous opportunities of advertising to this Topic. Happy indeed is it for us that one great example of unmingled excellence is set before us in the character of our Lord. In him we have a full exhibition of perfection in our nature, so that looking to him we may see clearly what we ought to aim at under every variety of situation in which we may be placed. Through grace received from him, many have gone far in imitating his blessed example. The very record of their failings is a direct proof that they were in general irreproachable in character and eminent in holiness; for their imperfections are noticed as exceptions to their general character.

A few individuals are introduced in the scriptures to whom no fault stands charged, as Enoch, Joseph, Caleb, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, &c. In the wisdom of God it did not appear necessary to produce the whole of their respective characters, but only such parts as stood connected with the general history or were most fitted to benefit succeeding generations. Commonly, however, the unlovely as well as the brighter part of the character of God's servants is fully portrayed; and it is worthy of remark that their recorded faults are frequently such as might least have been expected from them. Over their very virtues Satan was permitted a temporary triumph. The intemperance of Noah, the sinful timidity of Abraham, and of Isaac, Jacob's dissimulation and falsehood, Job's impatience, the intemperate anger of Moses, David's flagrant transgressions, Solomon's backslidings, Asa's wrath against the Lord's prophet, Elijah's uncharitableness, Jehohaphat's improper league with Ahab, Josiah's rashness, Hezekiah's vanity, and Peter's denial of Christ—these are spots upon the garments of holy men which are not concealed from posterity, but undisguisedly exposed for our admonition and better caution.

At the same time it must be observed that in scripture equal justice is done to characters decidedly bad; their occasional good acts had the reward of an honourable narrative, so far as they deserved it. Preachers will follow this example and speak well of characters as far as truth will permit and true candour demands: see 1 Cor. xiii. No character is so entirely bad as to be destitute of every worthy quality. God does not permit men to become wholly devils on this fair spot of his creation; and what he does permit he overrules for good. But the principal province of a preacher's investigation in reference to this Topic will be the character of good men, and the intermixtures of qualities found in them.

And here I observe that the scriptures give us the very philosophy of the subject as well as its historical material. The two principles in every good man are clearly pointed out, and called the flesh and the spirit, the old and the new man. Our Lord opens this mystery, Matt. xxvi. 41: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Between these two principles there is in every good man a continual conflict, Gal. v. 17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the thing that we would." This conflict and this commixture, these contrarieties and paradoxes are particularly laid open in Paul's seventh chapter to the Romans.* Here we have the motions of sin and the excitements of divine grace, the flesh provoking to sin, in which the spirit gives neither consent nor concurrence. We have captivities and deliverances, bitter complaints and joyful thanksgivings. We read of no

* See Dr. Stafford's Sermons on the whole of this chapter.

such conflicts in the mind of Jehu or Herod ; their history discloses different states of mind and feeling, but no conflict with sin appears. The good and the bad are so mentioned in history as to leave no one in doubt of their real character. Of Jehu it is said that he completely and zealously fulfilled Jehovah's purposes on the whole house and wicked religious economy of Ahab ; so that he might well say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." Yet this was the subsequent record concerning him : "Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from following after them." Thus we conclude that his general character was radically bad. Herod became a disciple of John the Baptist, took him into his court, "heard him gladly, did many things," but he discovered the rottenness of his principles in his subsequently yielding up John to the wicked revenge of his unlawful wife ; so that accidental circumstances threw a mantle of religion over him, but, as it did not fit him closely, the first puff of wind blew it off again. Similar observations might be made on the first three classes of hearers noticed in our Lord's parable of the sower. A religion they had, but one that did not cover them, or did not fit them. Is it possible that a preacher can be more useful than when he is judiciously engaged in separating the precious from the vile, and showing to each of his hearers "his form and feature?" And by all means let the preacher examine himself by the same rule. Even our motives in preaching may have some bad taint, though sound upon the whole ; and we have reason to pray, in the language of the English liturgy, "Cleanse thou the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit," that all our words and intentions may be pleasing in God's sight. We must also recollect that the only object which must be had in view in these retrospects of character is purely the edification, the comfort, or caution of the people, to hold up (as St. Paul did, 1 Cor. x., and Heb. ii. 3, &c.) a glass to the present age, and not to gratify a foolish passion for passing judgments.

This Topic is capable of affording a very agreeable variety in division ; and, wherever the text includes any thing of the mixed character which has been described, it would be improper to overlook it. The following examples will however best illustrate its use.

Jay's Sermon on Job xxix. 18 : "Then I said, I shall die in my nest."

I. In these words we see something good ; even in his greatest prosperity Job had thoughts of dying.

II. Something desirable—the continuance of providential mercies. Our error in desiring temporal things consists,

1. In desiring them *unconditionally*.
2. In desiring them *supremely*.

III. Something very common ; it is affluence and ease cherishing confidence and presumption.

IV. Something false and vain : "I shall die in my nest." While Job was thus giving security to his soul, the storm was rising which soon shook down his nest and lodged its contents upon the dunghill. Children, wife, property, reputation, may all be removed in a day ; therefore his gratulations were premature : Prov. xxvii. 1.

Burder's Village Sermons, on Acts xvi. 30, 31 : "What shall I do to be saved?"

I. There are some excellent tokens of character in the jailer.

1. His deep sense of the value of his soul.
2. His views of sin, which he saw endangered his soul.
3. His presentiment that Paul and Silas could give him counsel on the subject.

II. There was also much that was wrong.

1. A strong leaning to creatures' help.
2. Much legal fear, which brings on a bondage state, Gal. iv. 24.
3. Great ignorance, though a happy sensibility of it,

Simeon on 1 Sam. xiii. 11—13.

I. Show how far the conduct of Saul was good and commendable.

1. He dared not encounter his adversary till he had sought God.
2. He sought after an appointed manner, viz. by sacrifice.

II. In what respects he was reprehensible. Samuel's speech does not imply a charge that Saul had usurped the priest's office. Indeed, ever since the Israelites came out of the wilderness, there had been by sufferance very great irregularity in the sacrificial offering; but,

1. His unbelieving precipitancy in curtailing the appointed time.
2. His unwarrantable dependence on a merely ritual observance.

The same author on Mark xiv. 31: "But he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with thee I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise said they all." Consider,

- I. The wisdom of the resolution as worthy of the christian character.
 1. Our Saviour deserves it at our hands.
 2. At our hands he requires it.
- II. The folly of the resolution as announced in his own strength.

John Howe, on John xi. 16: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." There was no doubt an abounding fulness of sense in this good man's soul, whence these words did proceed; and it might be two-fold, either good and commendable, fit for our imitation, or faulty and reprehensible.

- I. There was much in this language that was commendable. It evinced,
 1. A firm belief of a future state.
 2. A mind loose and disengaged from the present world.
 3. Easy, placid thoughts of dying.
 4. A distinguishing judgment of the states of men hereafter, that they will correspond with the characters they bear on earth.
 5. A rational and charitable opinion and estimate that he was sincerely good and happy with whom he wished to be united in death.
 6. A most ardent and generous love to such excellent characters, expressed by a desire to die with them.
 7. A lively apprehension of the large abounding diffusion of the divine fulness, sufficiently able to replenish all that shall be prepared to partake in it.
 8. Preference of the society with holy beings in the heavenly state above any to be enjoyed on earth.
- II. There might be an intermixture in the temper of this good man, somewhat of a faulty character; as,
 1. There might be too little consideration of the dignity and value of human life, and which God so graciously sustains.
 2. The words seem not to savour enough of that deference which is due to the God of our lives, whose prerogative it is "to kill and to make alive."
 3. They indicate too little gratitude for the mercies of life, or impatience under its difficulties, somewhat like that of Jonah.
 4. Too little regard to the business of life, especially the great affair of the apostleship, Matt. x. 1, &c.
 5. Not a sufficient apprehension how awful a thing it was to die, to change states, to pass into eternity.
 6. Too much displacency at the providence of God in taking away such a man at such a time, &c.

These thoughts will, upon examination, be found great and weighty, and the conclusions to be drawn from them, and especially from the last subdivision, would be peculiarly suited for instruction and admonition under the

feelings naturally entertained on the demise of so great a man as Dr. Bates, whose death occasioned the discourse.*

Henry's Exposition on Micah vi. 6—8: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord," &c. He observes that "the enquiry of Israel† was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make, but their proposals betray their ignorance, though they show their zeal."

I. They bid high. They offer,

1. That which is very rich and costly—"thousands of rams." God required one ram for a sin-offering; they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock, will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have—the rams, and the most of them, till it comes to thousands.

2. That which is very dear to them, and which they would be most loth to part with. They could be content to part with their "firstborn for their transgressions," if that would be accepted as an atonement, and "the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul."

II. Yet they do not bid right. It is true some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of burnt-offerings to God's altar and calves of a year old, rams for sin-offerings, and oil for the meat-offerings; but these alone would not recommend them to God. God had often declared that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," that "sacrifice and offering" he "would not;" the legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from their institution and the reference they had to Christ the great propitiation; but otherwise, of themselves, it was "impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." And, as to the other things here mentioned,

1. Some of them are impracticable things, as "rivers of oil," which nature has not provided to feed men's luxury; but rivers of water to supply men's necessity. All the proposals of peace but those that are according to the gospel are absurd. One stream of the blood of Christ is worth ten thousand "rivers of oil."

2. Some of them are wicked things, as to give our "firstborn" and "the fruit of our body" to death, which would but add to the "transgression" and the "sin of the soul." He that hates robbery by burnt-offering much more hates murder, and such murder. What right have we to our "firstborn" and "the fruit of our body?" Do they not belong to God? Are they not his already and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature and their lives forfeited upon their own account? How then can they be a ransom for ours?

3. They are all external things, parts of that "bodily exercise" which "profiteth little," and which "could not make the comers thereunto perfect."

4. They are all insignificant, and insufficient to attain the end proposed; they could not answer the demands of divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God in his honour by sin, nor would they serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart and the reformation of the life. Men will part with any thing rather than their sins; but they part with nothing to God's acceptance unless they part with them.

I beg leave to add a specimen of a somewhat different kind from the same author on Zech. vii. 3—7.

I. The case proposed concerning fasting, ver. 3: "Speak unto the priests who were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?" Observe,

1. What had been their past practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity, but to this time? They kept up solemn stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they had. Now it was very commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences by which God called them to weeping and mourning, &c.

2. What was their present doubt—whether they should continue these fasts or no?

1.) Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts. Fasting and praying are good work at any time. We have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their

* It is inserted in Dr. Bates's Works.

† [The reader will perceive that Henry errs here. The inquiry is Balak's.]

being too secure and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress and under the tokens of God's displeasure; and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper.

2.) There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them and returned in ways of mercy to them; and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now that "the bridegroom" has returned why should "the children of the bridechamber" fast? Every thing is beautiful in its season. And, as to the fast of the "fifth month," that, being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the others, because the temple was now in a firm way of being rebuilt. But, having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case.

II. The answer given to this case. It should seem that though the question looked plausible enough those who proposed it were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance. And therefore the first answer to their enquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy.

1. What they did that was good was not done aright, ver. 5, 6.

1.) They had not an eye to God in their fasting: "Did you at all fast unto me, even to me?"

2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting that they had in their eating and drinking.

2. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone: "Should you not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets?"

The following example, on imperfect goodness, may be considered as within the limits of our Topic. It is the production of Saurin, founded on Hos. vi. 4: "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee?" &c.

This fickle, inconstant religion, is bad enough; but it is not hypocrisy against which the fire of divine anger will certainly fall. Nor is it the feeble piety of a tottering Christian; for, however imperfect his piety may be, it is real, and it would be too severe to say of this piety, "It is like the early dew, and goeth away:" but it is between these two dispositions. It does not go so far as the latter, but it goes further than the former. It is sincere, so it is superior to hypocrisy; but it is fruitless, and so it is inferior to weak piety. It is sufficient to discover sin, but not sufficient to correct it. It can promise sincerely, but it does not perform. It weeps, but it does not break off bad habits. It is a certain religion of times, circumstances, &c., and owes its birth frequently to public calamities, to solemn fasts, or to the approach of death, or the apprehensions of such an event; but it frequently vanishes with the causes which produced it, &c. All the images which Jehovah uses in the scriptures to make himself known to us—those which are taken from our infirmities, our passions, our love, and our hatred—are insufficient to represent a Being too far elevated above men to be represented by any thing human. Yet all these images have a reality which agrees to the Supreme Being in an eminent manner, in a manner proportioned to his dignity. Jehovah represents himself as a prince who has formed a close connexion with his subject; this subject appears sensible of the honour done him. The prince signalizes his esteem by a profusion of benefits; the subject abuses them. The prince reproaches him; he is hardened. To reproaches have been added threatenings; threatenings have been followed by suspension of favours: the subject is touched, affected, reanimated. The prince receives the penitent with open arms, and crowns his return with redoubled acts of kindness. The ungrateful subject abuses them again. The prince again reproaches him, again threatens him, and again suspends the tokens of his love. To remove the same misery the subject uses the same means, and avails himself of the liberty of returning which the goodness of the prince allows him, and again he returns. The prince yet pities, and again pardons his relenting ingrate: but this perfidious subject, slighting the tenderness of his master, falls so often into this ungrateful behaviour that the prince becomes a prey to a thousand opposite thoughts; he feels himself divided between the fear of rewarding ingratitude and punishing fidelity. This image is most certainly infinitely beneath the Supreme Being: however, it is that image which he has chosen to employ. "What shall I do to thee, Ephraim?" Ephraim, Judah, why do you rend my heart alternately by your vices and virtues? Why do you not suffer me either wholly to give myself to you or wholly to detach my affections from you? Why do you not let me give a free course either to my justice or my love? Either let me glorify myself by your return or by

your ruin! Your devotions tie my hands; your crimes inflame my wrath. Shall I destroy a people who have recourse to my clemency? Shall I preserve a people who violate my laws? "What shall I do to thee, Ephraim? what shall I do to thee, Judah? for thy goodness is as a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goeth away?"

Here is indeed a very fine balancing of the account, of the good and bad; and it seems clear that the preponderance is on the side of the latter, and nothing but sovereign and free grace could save the guilty subject. He must go unless the prince cries, "Save him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom."

I have reserved Dr. Blair's example of the good and the bad as the subject of extended remark, not indeed that the nature of the Topic may be better understood, but to give the subject upon which he treats a fair examination, because the just reputation of the Christian ministry depends on a proper issue of the great question, whether the desire of human applause should live or become extinct for ever. It is a question of life or death as to this fascinating, bewitching, imaginary being, and therefore I pray thee to hear me patiently.

The authority of Dr. Blair, supported as he is by a host of Christian moralists of very high name, and the general concurrent opinion running in the same channel, seem at least to prejudice the question, and to throw difficulties in the conclusion to be drawn from the statement of the case and the arguments to be adduced; and when it is further considered that the prevalent opinion has, for a great length of time, drawn the practice after it, and that even now that practice is as general as ever, it is confessed that something very solid and substantial will be required even to bring the matter to a state of suspense, and something more weighty still to subvert the plausibilities advanced in its favour.

But, if I do not succeed generally in representing what I consider to be the truth, at least I hope that the yet unprejudiced student, who desires to go into the work of his Master unembarrassed and unfettered by popular notions, will come to a fair opinion on the subject. The text of Dr. Blair's discourse is John xii. 43: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." His position seems to be this—that, kept under proper restraints, the praise of men may be called in aid of great and worthy exertions: this is met by a contrary assertion derived from the gospel, that no such passion should be tolerated, that it is uncalled for, mischievous, and sinful, and that the public good has other aids sufficiently powerful without it.

"Let us," says the doctor, "consider how far it [the love of praise] is an allowable principle of action; when it begins to be criminal; and upon what accounts we ought to guard against its acquiring the entire ascendancy?"

It seems that the love of praise is not much like the principles of action which the New Testament prescribes, since it must not be allowed its full operation, but placed under strict limitations, like a horse which must be held in with bit and bridle. We may ride the high-mettled animal, but he must carry us no faster than is allowable. But let us see how fast and how far he may go.

We are intended by Providence to be connected with one another in society. Single unassisted individuals could make small advances towards any valuable improvement. By means of society our wants are supplied and our lives rendered comfortable, our capacities are enlarged and our virtuous affections called forth into proper exercise. In

order to confirm our mutual connexion, it was *necessary that some attracting power* which had the effect of drawing men together, and strengthening the social ties, should pervade the human system. Nothing could more happily fulfil this purpose than our being so formed as to desire the esteem and to delight in the good opinion of each other. Had such a propensity been wanting, and selfish principles been left to occupy its place, society must have proved an unharmonious and discordant state. Instead of mutual attraction, a repulsive power would have prevailed. Among men who had no regard to the approbation of one another, all intercourse would have been jarring and offensive. For the wisest ends, therefore, the desire of praise was made an original and powerful principle in the human breast.

To a variety of good purposes it is subservient, and on many occasions it co-operates with the principle of virtue. It awakens us from sloth, invigorates activity, and stimulates our efforts to excel. It has given rise to most of the splendid and to many of the useful enterprises of men. It has animated the patriot and fired the hero. Magnanimity, generosity, and fortitude, are what all mankind admire. Hence such as were actuated by the desire of extensive fame have been prompted to deeds which either participated of the spirit, or at least carried the *appearance*, of distinguished virtue. The desire of praise is generally connected with all the *finer sensibilities* of human nature [not of grace]. It affords a ground on which exhortation, counsel, and reproof, can work a proper effect. Whereas, to be entirely destitute of this passion betokens an ignoble mind, on which no moral impression is easily made. Where there is no desire of praise there will be also no sense of reproach: and, if that be extinguished, one of the principal guards of virtue is removed, and the path opened to many opprobrious pursuits. He whose countenance never glowed with shame, and whose heart never beat at the sound of praise, is not destined for any honourable distinction; he is likely to grovel in the sordid quest of gain, or to slumber life away in the indolence of selfish pleasures.

Abstracted from the sentiments which are connected with the love of praise as a principle of action, the esteem of our fellow-creatures is an object which, on account of the advantages it brings, may be *lawfully pursued*. It is necessary to our success in every fair and honest undertaking. Not only our private interest, but our public usefulness, depends in a great measure upon it. The sphere of our influence is contracted or enlarged in proportion to the degree in which we enjoy the good opinion of the public. Men listen with an unwilling ear to one whom they do not honour; while a respected character adds weight to example and authority to counsel. To desire the esteem of others for the sake of its effects is not only allowable, but in many cases our duty; and to be totally indifferent to praise or censure is so far from being a virtue that it is a real defect of character.

Such is Dr. Blair's statement of the value of this popular applause, and, being quite willing to give every advantage to the cause, I add the following remarks of an eloquent and truly valuable Christian author.*

It is a principle the extinction of which would be like the annihilation, in the material world, of the principle of motion: without it all were torpid, and cold, and comfortless. Admitting what may be blameable in it, yet, when turned into the right direction, it prompts to every dignified and generous enterprise. It is erudition in the portico, skill in the lyceum, eloquence in the senate and in the pulpit, victory in the field. When once the soul is warmed by its generous ardour no difficulties deter, no danger terrifies, no labour tires. It is this which, giving to what is virtuous and honourable its just superiority over the gifts of birth and fortune, rescues the rich from a base subjection to the pleasures of sense, and makes them prefer a course of trial and hardship to a life of indolence and ease. It prevents the man of rank from acquiescing in his hereditary greatness, and spurs him forward in pursuit of personal distinction and of a nobility which he may justly term his own. It moderates and qualifies the over-great inequality of human conditions; and, reaching to those who are above the sphere of laws, and extending to cases which fall not within their province, it limits and circumscribes the power of the tyrant on his throne, and gives gentleness to war, and to pride humility.

Nor is its influence confined to public life: to it is to be ascribed a large portion of that courtesy and disposition to please which, naturally producing a mutual appearance of good-will and a reciprocation of good offices, constitutes much of the comfort of

* Wilberforce on Practical Christianity.

private life and gives their choicest sweets to social and domestic intercourse; and though it may sometimes bear a doubtful character, and were it no more than a splendid error, yet, considering that it works so often in the right direction, it were enough to urge in its behalf that it is a principle of real action and approved energy; it acts by motives and considerations suited to our condition, and is absolutely necessary in our present infirm state as an habitual aid, and even present support, to the feebleness of virtue. Reject not therefore a principle so universal in its influence, thus valuable in its effect; but let us be grateful for such a boon to mankind.

We must now proceed to consider the doctor's arguments for the just limitation of this principle; and these I think are sufficiently cogent to lead us to conclude that it has a much closer alliance to vice than virtue, and ought to be abandoned. Extinction, however, is not contemplated by the doctor. His design is to preserve the magical power of praise, though at some sacrifice. He observes—

While the love of praise is admitted to be a natural and in so many respects a useful principle of action, it is entitled to no more than our secondary regard. It has its boundary set, by transgressing which it is at once transformed from an innocent into a most dangerous passion. More sacred and venerable principles claim the chief direction of human conduct. All the good effects which we have ascribed to the desire of praise are produced by it when remaining in a subordinate station. But when, passing its natural line, it becomes the ruling spring of conduct, when the regard which we pay to the opinions of men encroaches on that reverence which we owe to the voice of conscience and the sense of duty, the love of praise, having then gone out of its proper place, instead of improving corrupts, and instead of elevating debases our nature. The proportion which this passion holds to other principles of action is what renders it either innocent or criminal. The crime with which the Jewish rulers are charged in the text was not that they loved the praise of men, but that they loved it *more than the praise of God*. What a wise and good man ought to study is to preserve his mind free from any such solicitude concerning praise as may be in hazard of overcoming his sense of duty. The approbation of men he may wish to obtain, as far as is consistent with the approbation of God. But, when both cannot be enjoyed together, there ought to be no suspense. He is to retire contented with the testimony of a good conscience, and to show, by the firmness of his behaviour, that in the cause of truth and virtue he is superior to all opinion.

1. The praise of men is not an object of such value in itself as to be entitled to become the *leading principle* of conduct. We degrade our character when we allow it more than subordinate regard. Like other worldly goods, it is apt to dazzle us with a false lustre; but, if we would ascertain its true worth, let us reflect both on whom it is bestowed and from whom it proceeds. Were the applause of the world always the reward of merit, were it appropriated to such alone as by real abilities or by worthy actions are entitled to rise above the crowd, we might justly be flattered by possessing a rare and valuable distinction. But how far is this from being the case in fact! How often have the despicable and the vile, by dexterously catching the favour of the multitude, soared upon the wings of popular applause, while the virtuous and the deserving have been either buried in obscurity or obliged to encounter the attacks of unjust reproach! Let the man who is vain of public favour be humbled by the reflection that, in the midst of his success, he is mingled with a crowd of impostors and deceivers, of hypocrites and enthusiasts, of ignorant pretenders and superficial reasoners, who, by various arts, have obtained as high a rank as himself in temporary fame.

We may easily be satisfied that applause will be often shared by the undeserving if we allow ourselves to consider from whom it proceeds. A mixed multitude of men, who in their whole conduct are guided by humour and caprice far more than by reason, who admire false appearances and pursue false gods, who enquire superficially and judge rashly, whose sentiments are for the most part erroneous, always changeable, and often inconsistent. And is it to such judges as these that you submit the supreme direction of your conduct? Do you stoop to court their favour as your chief distinction when an object of so much juster and higher ambition is presented to you in the praise of God? God is the only unerring judge of what is excellent. His approbation alone is the substance, all other praise is but the shadow, of honour. The character which you bear in his sight is your only real one. How contemptible does it

render you to be indifferent with respect to this, and to be solicitous about a name only, a fictitious imaginary character, which has no existence except in the opinions of a few weak and credulous men around you !

Consider, further, how narrow and circumscribed in its limits that fame is which the vain-glorious man so eagerly pursues. In order to show him this, I shall not bid him reflect that it is confined to a small district of the earth ; I shall not desire him to consider that, in the gulf of oblivion, where all human materials are swallowed up, his name and fame must soon be inevitably lost ; but let him calmly reflect that within the narrow boundaries of that country to which he belongs, and during that small portion of time which his life fills up, his reputation, great as he may fancy it to be, occupies no more than an inconsiderable corner. Multitudes of those among whom he dwells are totally ignorant of his name and character : many imagine themselves too important to regard him ; and, where his reputation is in any degree spread, it has often been attacked, and rivals are daily rising to abate it.

From all these considerations it clearly appears that though the esteem of our fellow-creatures be pleasing, and the pursuit of it, in a moderate degree, be fair and lawful, yet it affords no such object to desire as entitles it to be a ruling principle.

2. An excessive love of praise never fails to undermine the regard due to conscience and to corrupt the heart. It turns off the eye of the mind from the ends which it ought chiefly to keep in view, and sets up a false light for its guide. Its influence is the more dangerous as the colour which it assumes is often fair, and its garb and appearance are nearly allied to that of virtue. The love of glory, I before admitted, may give birth to actions which are both splendid and useful. But constancy and steadiness are to be looked for from him only whose conduct is regulated by a sense of what is right, *whose praise is not of men, but of God*, whose motive to discharge his duty is always the same. Change, as much as you please, the situation of such a man ; let applause or let censure be his lot ; let the public voice, which this day has extolled him, to-morrow as loudly decry him ; on the tenour of his behaviour these changes produce no effect. Whereas the apparent virtues of that man whose eye is fixed on the world are precarious and temporary. Supported only by circumstances, occasions, and particular regards, they fluctuate and fall with these.

3. This passion, when it becomes predominant, most commonly defeats its own end, and deprives men of the honour which they are so eager to gain. Without preserving liberty and independence, we can never command respect. That servility of spirit which subjects us to the opinions of others, and renders us tributaries to the world for the sake of applause, is what all mankind despise. They look up with reverence to one who, unawed by their censures, acts according to his own sense of things and follows the free impulse of an honourable mind. But him who hangs totally on their judgment they consider as their vassal. They even enjoy a malignant pleasure in humbling his vanity and withholding that praise which he is seen to court.

4. As an immoderate passion for human praise is dangerous to virtue and unfavourable to true honour, so it is destructive of self-enjoyment and inward peace. Walking uprightly we walk surely, because we tread an even and open path. But he who turns aside from the straight road of duty in order to gain applause involves himself in an intricate labyrinth. His mind will be always on the stretch. He will be obliged to listen with anxious attention to every whisper of the popular voice. The demands of those masters whom he has submitted to serve will prove frequently contradictory and inconsistent. He has prepared a yoke for his neck which he must resolve to bear, how much soever it may gall him. Conscience will, from time to time, remind him of the improper sacrifices which he has made, and of the forfeiture which he has incurred of the praise of God, for the sake of praise from men. Suppose him to receive all the rewards which the mistaken opinion of the world can bestow, its loudest applause will often be unable to drown the upbraidings of an inward voice ; and, if a man is reduced to be ashamed of himself, what avails it to him to be caressed by others ? But, in truth, the reward towards which he looks who proposes human praise as his ultimate object will be always flying like a shadow before him. So capricious and uncertain, so fickle and mutable, is the favour of the multitude, that it proves the most unsatisfactory of all pursuits in which men can be engaged. He who sets his heart on it is preparing for himself perpetual mortifications. If the greatest and best can seldom retain it long, we may easily believe that from the vain and undeserving it will suddenly escape.

5. The advantages which redound from the praise of men are not such as can bear to be put in competition with those which flow from the praise of God. The former

are necessarily confined within the verge of our present existence; the latter follow us beyond the grave, and extend through all eternity. Not only is the praise of men limited in its effects to this life, but also to particular situations of it. In the days of health and ease it may brighten the sunshine of prosperity; it may then soothe the ear with pleasing accents and gratify the imagination with fancied triumphs. But, when the distressful seasons of life arrive, it will be found altogether hollow and unsubstantial: and surely the value of any possession is to be chiefly estimated by the relief which it can bring us in the time of our greatest need.

These arguments clearly show the importance of preserving the love of praise under proper subordination to the principle of duty. In itself it is a useful motive to action; but, when allowed to extend its influence too far, it corrupts the whole character, and produces guilt, disgrace, and misery. To be entirely destitute of it is a defect; to be governed by it is depravity. The proper adjustment of the several principles of action in human nature is a matter that deserves our highest attention; for, when any one of them becomes either too weak or too strong, it endangers both our virtue and our happiness.

Such are the arguments of Dr. Blair against the immoderate love of praise, yet he yields not to the force of his own arguments; he retracts not from his first position, that, under proper limits, it is an *allowable principle* on the ground of that good which it may produce. He admits that it may weaken virtue—that it may associate with vice and criminality; yet he will not abandon it. That this good may be done, he would hazard the individual who is to effect it; the good must be done whatever it costs. The adventurer is to be armed at all points, but go he must. Never was there such a trial to the principles of a public man, to his real honour and his everlasting safety. Could we summon the spectres of some unhappy beings from another world, who on earth pursued the phantom of popular applause, and could we hear them tell the history of their error, and all the fatal consequences bound up in it, we should be appalled at the thought of still following the delusion by which they were ruined. Or could we call from heaven some pardoned spirit, that had been caught in the snare of popular applause, would he not say, “Oh venture not upon that intoxicating draught. I had nearly been destroyed by it. At the first it appeared an innocent joy, but by degrees it insinuated itself, and by slow progress grew till it nearly obtained the mastery of all my principles. My spirit swelled in its own importance; I looked on the multitudes of those who praised me on both sides the Atlantic; nay, wherever my fame reached, wonder followed. It is true my ministry was blessed above the common rank of favourites, but withal at dreadful discount of my Christian character!”*

It must, I think, be apparent to every Christian mind that the good in human applause is lost in the volumes of smoke and mischief attending it; but if the thing itself were right in the sight of God, and warranted by the gospel, all that could be accumulated together against it should not prevent our resorting to it as an arm of power. If the splendid account of its brilliant acts were supported by one unequivocal direction, one pure example of the gospel, it would merit attention; but in the gospel nothing of the kind is to be found. On the contrary, when the opportunity so fairly presented itself to our Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by Dr. Blair's text, to place this affair on its true basis—to give to human praise its exact value, to direct the judgment of his followers concerning it, as to what degree of influence it ought to possess over our actions and with what limitations we might indulge it—not a word is uttered in its favour, not the most distant intimation is given that it possesses any value whatever. He did not say

* See Bickersteth, p. 169, and Owen's Works, vol. vii., p. 472, and Pulpit, vol. 1, p. 516.

that the praise of men was an excellent incentive to action and commendable when properly restrained ; on the contrary he ordered a record to be made of the solemn fact that the lovers of praise were amongst his enemies. But there was another opportunity in our Lord's life that determines the matter. When Peter and John desired pre-eminence they were rebuked ; he declared that he would allow of no pre-eminence, that if any one seized it he should be abased, and that except our humility resembled that of a little child we should in no wise belong to his kingdom. It is clear from the testimony of the gospel that the extinction of this spirit of self-importance is to be effected, that no flesh should glory in God's presence ; and, though the passions are not to be extirpated, yet they are to be turned completely into a new direction.

But it may be said that "religion does accomodate itself, in some measure, to circumstances ; and, where the cause of the gospel may be promoted by a little popularity, it is quite necessary to desire it." Is then religion seeking an alliance of a really discreditable character ? Has Christ left his church so destitute of powers and energies that a merely carnal passion can help it, must help it, if upheld in its due station ? This were truly deplorable, and, by accepting such dubious aid, we should be like the kings of Judah and Israel, who sought alliance among the heathen nations, and found that they were leaning upon a broken spear, which pierced the hand that rested upon it. But has Christ left his church destitute of energies ? If he had, he would have left his people comfortless ; but he says, "I will not leave you comfortless ;" "my power and my presence shall be with you." And what are the true energies of the gospel ? are they not *holy love* and *burning zeal* for the glory of the gospel and the good of mankind ? Did these ever fail when duly sought, when duly exerted ? Did not these principles bring the Saviour from heaven ? Did not the love of Christ constrain, urge, push forward with an irresistible impetus, the apostle Paul ? Did he not by this plant the standard of the cross throughout the Roman empire ? Was he not at the same time and throughout his life one of the most humble characters that ever adorned the christian church ? Fame he did indeed acquire ; but how did this come about ? It followed his exertions, but did not lead the way : it was an ordained consequence that blessed his memory. He sought not popular applause ; and, when he had found the result, he was not elated, but said, "not I, but the grace of God that was with me." And, generally, there is no doubt that the more gifts, the more popularity, the more effect produced, the more humility will be produced when the soul is in a perfectly healthy state. As our exaltation in heaven will no doubt be the cause of increased humility, so here, on earth, it is only the corruptions of nature that prevent this effect.

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall lie."

Paul did not despise his reputation in the churches, but neither did he desire human applause. Feeling the power of his influence, he made it subserve the glory of his Master. It was a treasure that fell into his hands, and he devoted it to the service of the gospel.

If applause should never follow our exertions in the same or in any degree, yet we must "commit ourselves in well-doing to him that judgeth righteously." We must live above the expectancy of applause ; nay, we must suppose that an unjust world will withhold it—power may suppress

it—envy may stifle it; and we must even wait the discoveries of the great day of final account to receive that praise which comes from God. “Even now we must rise on the wings of contemplation until the praises and censures of men die away upon our ear, and the still small voice of conscience is no longer drowned by the din of this nether world. Here the sight is apt to be occupied with earthly objects, and the hearing to be engrossed with earthly sounds; but there we shall come within the view of that resplendent and incorruptible crown which is held forth to our acceptance in the realms of light, and our ear shall be regaled with heavenly melody. Here we dwell in a variable atmosphere: the prospect is at one time darkened by the gloom of disgrace and at another the eye is dazzled by the gleamings of glory; but, ascended above this inconstant region, no storms agitate, no clouds obscure the air; the lightnings play and the thunders roll beneath.”

If I should be so happy in this representation of the apparent good in human applause, together with its emulating flirting qualities on the one hand, and on the other the overwhelming dead weight of the bad, as to determine any wavering mind to seek the extirpation for ever of such a destructive principle from his heart, and to pursue the only right path to honour, to be watchful and vigilant against the risings of corrupt nature, from which all desire of praise springs up—if such should be the result, I shall think myself fully rewarded, and my joy will be great.

Energies or impetus I know the preacher must have; but, since the choice lies before us to take the power from heathen or evangelical store, we cannot hesitate how to determine. If any real revival is to be witnessed, of which we hear so much, it must be effected by evangelical means. “The weapons of our warfare are carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ:” 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

I have taken no notice whatever of what Dr. Blair or any other says as to the value of praise in cementing human societies together, because this part of the subject is foreign from my purpose; but, if it were necessary to attach any importance to it, I should only observe that *Christian love* is a far better cement of society than a mere ambition to please. Surely Dr. Blair had forgotten the thirteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians: here the whole matter is settled for ever, as to all that is necessary to produce universal harmony among mankind; and the New Testament, generally, contains all the truest elements of the social compact, and all the safest means of securing it that ever the world knew.

I cannot close this Topic respecting the *good* and the *bad*, without requesting that the good found in this work may be accepted and the bad forgiven.

LECTURE XXV.

TOPIC XXI.

SUPPOSE THINGS.

SUPPOSITIONS are somewhat like mushrooms: they spring up suddenly, and suddenly perish. However, it must be admitted that when judiciously

selected and prepared they may sometimes serve a valuable purpose, by enabling us to place our subjects and arguments in a strong and improved light. We must always take care that our suppositions are dictated by good sense ; for, of all the silly things in the world, a silly supposition is one of the most contemptible imaginable.* Mons. Claude considers this Topic as being principally used in controversy, and gives the following example :—" When you are speaking of the merit of good works, you may take this way of supposition, and say : Let us suppose that Jesus Christ and his apostles held the doctrines of the church of Rome, and that they believed men merited eternal life by their good works. Let us suppose that they intended to teach us this doctrine in the Gospels and Epistles. Tell me, I beseech you, if upon this supposition (which is precisely what our adversaries pretend) they ought to have affirmed what they have affirmed. Tell me, pray, do you believe yourself well and sufficiently instructed in the doctrine of the merit of good works when you are told, 'When you have done all these things, say, We are unprofitable servants?' Again, when the example of a miserable publican is proposed to you, who prays, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' who smites his breast and dares not lift his eyes to heaven, when he is placed in opposition to a Pharisee glorying in his works, and when you are informed that the first 'went down to his house justified rather than the other,'—when you are told, 'If it be by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, and, if it be by works, it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work,'—when you are told, 'You are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,'—when you are assured that you are 'justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not of works, lest any man should boast,'—when you hear that 'to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,'—when you are taught to believe that 'the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life'—tell me, I once more entreat you, can you persuade yourself that Jesus Christ and his apostles, by all *these* means, intended to teach you that man acquires justification, and a right to eternal life, by the merit of his works ?

"You may also make such suppositions in morality as well as in controversy, in order to give greater weight to your exhortations."

With regard to subjects of controversy, suppositions are raised to throw the opponent into a dilemma, and to show that his conclusions respecting the thing on hand are irreconcilable with evidences of truth which he cannot but admit, or that they are contrary to common sense ; and here it lies with the opponent himself to reconcile the inconsistencies, if he can, before his conclusions be admitted.

Again : if an opponent maintain the literal sense of a passage of scripture where a metaphorical sense is intended, a supposition may be so framed as to show that it is contrary to common sense : for instance, Gen. iii. 15 : "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, and thou [the serpent] shalt bruise his heel."

If we suppose our first parents to understand these words literally, and that God meant them so to be understood, this passage must appear absolutely ridiculous. Do

* Poetical fiction are suppositions ; and so are parables, allegories, and all works of the imagination : these are to be tried by the rules of truth and good sense ; and in these suppositions, if good, lies great utility.

but imagine that you see God coming to *judge* the offenders, Adam and Eve, who stand before him in the utmost distress, that you hear God inflicting pains, and sorrows, and misery, and death, upon the first of the human race, and that, in the midst of all this scene of woe and great calamity, you hear God foretelling, with great solemnity, a very *trivial accident* that should sometimes happen in the world—that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and that men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on the head ! In the name of common sense, what has this trifle to do with the loss of mankind, with the corruption of the natural and moral world, and the ruin of all the glory and happiness of the creation ? Great comfort it was to Adam, doubtless, after telling him that his days should be short and full of misery, and his end without hope, to let him know that he should now and then knock a snake on the head, but not even that without paying dearly for his poor victory, for the snake should often bite him by the heel ! Adam surely could not understand the prophecy in this sense, though some of his sons have so understood it, a plain indication how much more some men are concerned to maintain a literal interpretation of scripture than they are to speak common sense.*

The following suppositions are founded by Simeon on Gen. xviii. 24—32 :—

Suppose God had said, Find me fifty righteous, or thirty, or twenty, or only ten, and for their sakes I will pardon and save all the rest, we must have perished, because among the whole human race there is not one righteous, no, not one.

Suppose, instead of this, he had said, I will give my Son to die for your past offences, and bring you back to a state of probation whereby if you fall not again from your righteousness you shall be saved ; the offer would have been kind, but it would have been useless to us.

Still, suppose God had said, I foresee that a renewal of your former covenant would be to no purpose, and therefore my Son shall work out a righteousness for you, and I require nothing of you but to add to that a righteousness of your own, that the two righteousnesses together may form a joint ground of acceptance with me ; alas ! we should have been in as deplorable a state as before.

But suppose God yet further so lowered his demands as to say, I will give you a complete salvation through the blood and righteousness of my dear Son, and I will require nothing of you, but only to render yourselves worthy of it ; still our case would have been altogether helpless.

This was well known to God, therefore he proposed none of these things : he required only that we should believe in his Son and accept freely what he freely offers. It is true that if even this depended on ourselves we should perish, because without help we should not even believe ; still this is the condition which alone is suited to our helpless state, because it implies a total renunciation of all merit and strength in ourselves, and leads to Christ that we may find our all in him.

A few examples of division on this Topic shall now be adduced.

Lavington, vol. i., p. 25, on Heb. xi. 4 : “He, being dead, yet speaketh.” The text is not strictly adhered to, but treated as a motto, and the sermon is founded upon sundry suppositions, as to what the deceased would speak if she were in the place of the preacher. The preacher says,

I shall consider myself as her mouth to you. Hark ! hark ! she speaks ! she says, I. Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.

Hark ! she speaks again.

II. Seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, in the first place.

Hark ! she speaks again.

III. Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with *all thy might*.

Yet again she says,

IV. I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, &c.

On each of these topics he speaks eloquently, and then concludes with several important reflections. Here then you have a sermon upon suppositions. Mr. Simeon on the same text represents Abel as addressing the congregation in the following terms :—

* Bishop Sherlock's Third Discourse.

Brethren, though dead, I yet live; and, though I have been dead almost six thousand years, I would speak to you as though I had died but yesterday. I am concerned that you should profit by my experience. You are assembled to serve and worship your God: and you are ready to conceive that, on that account, you are all rendering unto God an acceptable service; but I must declare to you that this is far from being the case. Your outward forms, considered independently of the frame of mind in which you engage in them, are of no value in the sight of God. Sacrifices are in themselves worthless, Isa. lxvi. 3. God looks not at the *act*, but at the *heart*; and, if that be not right with him, your sacrifices, how costly soever they may be, are only "an abomination to him." Of all this you may be assured from what is related concerning my brother Cain and myself. He, as you have been told, was not accepted; whilst I was accepted. What is it that made the difference? Why did God look with complacency upon me and with abhorrence on him? It was because I approached him as a sinner, whose hopes were founded solely on the sacrifice of his Son, while my brother approached him without any such exercise of repentance and faith. And so it is with you. On those who draw nigh to him with a broken and contrite spirit, and with their eyes fixed on the Lamb of God to take away their sins, he looks with delight; he will even give to them sweet tokens of his acceptance and testimonies of his love; and, if he should not give the *visible* demonstrations to them which he did to me, he will not leave them without witness, even in the minds of their enemies, for he will so enrich their souls by his grace as to make it evident that "God is with them of a truth." But upon the proud self-righteous formalist God will look with scorn and indignation. Yes, to those of you who have come up hither merely to perform a duty that custom has prescribed, he says, "You hypocrites, in vain do you worship me, seeing that while you draw nigh to me with your mouths, and honour me with your lips, your hearts are far from me," Matt. xv. 7-9. I warn you then not to deceive your own souls; for assuredly, whether you will believe or not, God will ere long make the same distinction between you that he did between Cain and I: the contrite and believing worshippers shall have a testimony of his approbation before the whole assembled universe, but the impenitent and unbelieving shall be marked out as monuments of his everlasting displeasure. As for you who worship him in faith, he may for the present leave you in the hands of the ungodly, who, from envy, may be incensed against you; he may suffer your "greatest enemies to be those of your own household;" yea, he may even leave you to be put to death, and to suffer martyrdom for your fidelity to him: but let not that deter you from confessing him openly before men. I have never regretted the sufferings I endured for him; nor will you ever regret any thing you may be called to sustain. Even the testimony which you shall now enjoy in your own conscience shall be an ample recompense for all; what then shall that testimony in the day of judgment be, when he shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord?" Go on then without fear, and "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

This passage, besides furnishing an example of *supposition*, is worthy of your attention as an example of *personification*, of *contrast* (topic 18), and also of *paraphrastic comment*.

Zeph. iii. 17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over thee."

I. Suppose the people of God to fear, as Moses did, that God would depart from them, here the divine presence is declared, as Matt. xviii. 20; Josh. i. 5. Further, the text says, "He will rest in his love."

II. Suppose an individual to fear his own salvation: the text says, "He will save."

III. Suppose they should fear that their comforts would be withheld (as 2 Sam. xiv. 28), the text says, "He will rejoice over you with joy." See Isa. liv. 7-10, &c.

The following has been ascribed to the late Mr. Newton; it is on 1 Cor. x. 13: "There hath ~~no~~ temptation [trial] taken you but such as is common to man," &c. The people of the Lord are apt to suppose,

I. That their trial is singular. The text says the contrary.

II. That though they pray they shall not be delivered. The text says, God "will make a way for their escape."

III. That they shall not be able to bear the affliction during its continuance. The text says they shall "be able to bear it."

An author [Sterne] whose work cannot as a whole be recommended has the following passage on Luke xvi. 31 : "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."

Rise from the dead ! to what purpose ? what could such a messenger propose or urge which had not been proposed and urged already ? The novelty or surprise of such a visit is what might awaken the attention of a curious, unthinking people, who spend their time in nothing else but to hear and tell of some new thing : but, ere the wonder was well over, some new wonder would start up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead whence he came, and not a soul would make one enquiry about him.

This I fear would be the conclusion of the affair. But, to bring this matter still closer to us, let us imagine, if there be nothing unworthy in it, that God in compliance with a curious world—or from a better motive, in compassion to a sinful one—should vouchsafe to send one from the dead. Now bear with me, I beseech you, in forming such an address as I suppose would be most likely to gain our attention and conciliate the heart to what he had to say.

1. Suppose this messenger to urge our *interest*. He might tell us (after giving the most indisputable credentials of his mission) that he had come as a messenger from the great God of heaven, with reiterated proposals whereby much was to be granted us on his side and something to be parted with on ours ; but that, not to alarm us, it was neither houses nor lands, it was not wives, nor children, nor brethren, that we had to forsake, no one rational pleasure to be given up, no natural endearment to be torn from. In a word he would tell us we had nothing to part with but what it was *not* for our interest to keep, and that was our *sins*, which had brought death and misery to our doors. He would go on and prove, by a thousand arguments, that to be temperate, and chaste, and just, and peaceable, and charitable, and kind one to another, was only doing that for Christ's sake which was most for our own, and that, were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would submit to his government, he would convince us it would be impossible for the wit of man to frame any proposals more for our present interest than to lead an uncorrupted life, to do the thing that was lawful and right, and lay such restraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature and the refinement of human happiness.

2. Suppose the spectre to address himself to the other passions. In doing this he could but give us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of God ; nor could he do more than impress the most awful ones of his majesty and power ? He might remind us that we are creatures but of a day, hastening to the place whence we shall not return,—that during our stay we are accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercy, is yet terrible in judgments,—that he took notice of all our actions, that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and spied out all our ways,—and that he was so pure in his nature that he would punish even the wicked imagination of our hearts, and had appointed a day wherein he would enter into this enquiry. He might add —but what, with all the eloquence of an inspired tongue, what could he add or say to us which has not been said before ? The experiment has been tried a thousand times upon the hopes and fears, the reasons and passions of men, by all the powers of nature, the application of which has been so great, and the variety of addresses so unanswerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world than that so good a religion should be no better recommended by its professors.

This is a fine specimen of suppositions, and we are naturally led to one remark : If such be the condition of man, we may well say that nothing short of the Holy Spirit's work can rouse him from the death of sin, since messengers from the dead, though they were to exhibit the most impressive view of the glories of heaven and the flames of hell, would have no more than a temporary effect without this holy aid. We must, however, endeavour by suppositions, and any and all other means, to arouse attention, always looking to God for a divine blessing.

Beddome makes a good use of this Topic in the first part of his sermon

on Gal. vi. 7 : "Be not deceived." "We hope," says he, "that all is right, but *suppose* we should be mistaken." He then forms his first principal head by saying, "Let us consider some of the instances in which we are liable to be deceived." These instances are in fact suppositions.

1. One can easily perceive that those are deceived who think lightly of sin.
2. We think the same of those who effect or pretend that we make too great a stir about sin.
3. Some amuse themselves with thoughts of a death-bed repentance ; they suppose that, as the thief upon the cross found favour, so may they.
4. Some call good evil, and *vice versa*, or think their state to be good while it is stark naught.

The second general head embraces the evil and danger of self-deception, which are shown in several particulars.

The same author takes up this Topic in the second and principal division of his discourse on Jer. xiii. 27 : "O Jerusalem ! wilt thou not be made clean ? when shall it once be ?"

- I. Let us consider the question itself.
 1. It is of great importance to be cleansed from the filth of sin.
 2. Cleansing is the work of God.
 3. He has much at heart as to this point.
 4. Our unwillingness greatly obstructs it.
 5. But even this does not utterly prevent it.
- II. Let us consider the various answers which will be made to the questions before us : "Wilt thou not be made clean ? when shall it once be ?"
 1. It can easily be supposed that some of you are willing to be delivered from the punishment of sin, but not from its power—you will be justified but not sanctified.
 2. It may be imagined, without any breach of charity, that some of you would be cleansed outwardly only.
 3. It can be easily conceived that some of you would be made partly clean, but not wholly so.
 4. Others would probably wish to be made clean, but they do not like God's way of doing it, or the means he uses.
 5. Others would be cleansed but *not yet*, as Austin.*
 6. May we be allowed to suppose a case still worse, where the determined in wickedness openly say, We will not be cleansed at all ?
 7. But turn to the real Christian ; ask him the question : a good answer is ready immediately ; he cries out with the Psalmist (Ps. li. 2.), "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

This outline furnishes an opportunity for unravelling the secret wiles of the human heart ; and our author proceeds to answer these several suppositions in a sensible and judicious manner.

I add the following from Davies, vol ii., p. 414, on Mark xii. 6 : "They will reverence my son." Part of this sermon suits our purpose.

If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, we could have but little reason to expect that he would come into our world as a Saviour ; but,

I. Suppose he should come ; suppose he should all leave his glory to become a messenger of grace : suppose, I say, such a wonder as this is to be realized, might it not be reasonably expected that we should universally receive him with open arms ?

II. Suppose he so came for particular, specific, and all-gracious purposes, and sustained characters agreeable to the designs upon which he came.

1. Suppose he came as our *only deliverer*, how grateful should we be !
2. If he came as our great *high priest*, surely it might be expected that we should place our whole dependence on his atonement : and in the same manner with respect to all his redeeming acts.

* It is stated by Austin that he so prayed, being desirous of retaining his besetting sin a little longer.

These examples are quite sufficient to show the utility of the Topic in division. But, I repeat, great care must be taken to distinguish between what is *implied*, agreeably to the fifth Topic, and what is only *supposable*, according to the twenty-first Topic. It requires also a nice discrimination to determine when it is proper to have recourse to suppositions, and especially when to form divisions in whole or in part upon them. I should think it proper to give the Topic a prominent place in discoursing upon such a text as Jer. viii. 15: "We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of health, and behold trouble." There must be some supposable considerations to reconcile this with the goodness of God, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; and, if we refer to Jer. xiv. 19, 20, we are furnished with them. Now in such a case as this your first principal head might very properly comprise these supposable considerations.

There are also several supposable truths connected in our ideas with the text, Jer. viii. 15, though there is nothing which properly be considered as implied, and these might be treated in a similar manner.

In conclusion, allow me to say that we must never bring our suppositions with us when we come to the scriptures for instruction. This is a most frequent, but a most pernicious practice. Whatever the suppositionists meet with in scripture that agrees with their previously formed ideas they praise to the utmost; but, when they meet with passages and doctrines which contradict their previous notions, then we hear a tale: This is a mystery, or a strong figurative expression; it cannot exactly mean what it says, because God would never require our belief of a thing so repugnant to human reason, and so contrary to other passages of his word, &c.

TOPIC XXII.

GUARD AGAINST OBJECTIONS.

"THERE are very few texts of scripture," as Claude observes, "where this Topic may not be made use of; and it is needless to mention examples: they will occur to every one without much reflection. It may however be observed that the objections referred to must be natural and popular, not far-fetched, nor too philosophical; in a word, they must be such as it is absolutely necessary to notice and refute. They must be proposed in a clear and simple style, without rhetorical exaggerations, yet not unadorned nor unaffecting.

"I think it is never advisable to state objections and defer the answers to them till another opportunity; answer them directly, forcibly, and fully.

"Here it may be asked whether, in stating objections to be answered, it be proper to propose them altogether at once and then come to the answers, or whether they should be proposed and answered one by one? I suppose discretional good sense must serve for both guide and law upon this subject. If three or four objections regard only one part of the text, if each may be proposed and answered in a few words, it would not be amiss to propose these objections all together, distinguishing them, however, by first, second, third; this may be done agreeably. But if these objections regard *different parts* of the text, or different matters; if they require to be proposed at full length, and if it would also take some time to answer them—

it would be impertinence to propose them all together : in such a case they must be proposed and answered apart."

Mr. Robinson says, in a note on this Topic, "There is as much reason for giving this advice to preachers as there is for saying to an architect going to build, Guard against winds and storms : you build in summer and retire ; but your building must stand abroad all the winter. It would be folly to suppose that any religious truth, how demonstrable soever, could stand in this world free from objections. For all truths touch somebody's creed ; and, when you touch their bone and their flesh, it is well if they curse you not to your face." I submit, however, that we may be over tenacious : our business is not always with gainsayers ; if these contradict, let us go on preaching the truth, living upon its comforts, and guiding our course by its light. Yet occasions there are to regard our Topic. Claude recommends us to notice only such objections as are of a popular kind, leaving the cavils of very learned and abstruse opponents to other hands ; and, with regard to such as ought to be noticed, care must be taken not to violate the rules of candour, and to refute them by clear and sober arguments, such as the people can understand.

The following discourse of Bishop Sherlock furnishes a complete example of guarding against objections. It is founded on the objections of infidels to the gospel of Christ as unnecessary to man's happiness, which they contend is sufficiently and better secured in the general mercy of God, such as we must conceive of that attribute by our natural apprehensions. In this discourse the good bishop goes to the very bottom of the argument, and completely overturns the objections advanced, and at the same time establishes the truth in a very edifying manner. His text is John iii. 16 : "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In this passage of scripture, and in many others, the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ is ascribed to the goodness and love of God towards mankind. Whatever other difficulties men may find in the gospel, one would suppose that it might be admitted to be a good representation of the divine mercy towards mankind, and fully to display that tenderness and compassion to our weaknesses and infirmities which we all hope for and with some reason expect to receive from our Creator, whose "tender mercies are over all his works."

The case being so, who would expect to hear any objections against the gospel derived from the topics of the divine mercy and goodness ? Yet some there are who think the mercy of the gospel to be imperfect, and that nature gives far better hopes to all her children. They conceive the infirmities of human nature to be unavoidable, and the mercy of God to be infinite ; and from these considerations they raise hopes as unbounded as they conceive mercy to be. As they derive these strong assurances from natural reason, they conceive all promises of mercy to be unnecessary, and therefore to be suspected ; and the argument is worked up, not only to be an objection against the gospel revelation, but against all revelations either past or to come.

There is nothing of more consequence to the credit and authority of revelation than to reconcile it to the natural notions and the natural hopes and expectations of mankind ; and indeed the promises of the gospel and the hopes of nature are founded on the same common principles. Ask a Christian, why did God redeem mankind by sending his Son into the world ? He must answer, Because men were sinners, weak and miserable, and unable to rescue themselves from their wretched condition. Ask what moved God to express so much concern for such worthless objects ? He must resolve it into the goodness, and tenderness, and paternal affection of God, with which he embraces all the sons of men.

Ask the Deist upon what grounds he has hope and confidence towards God ? He will reply that he conceives it impossible for a beneficent being to be rigorous and severe towards the crimes and follies of such weak, foolish, and impotent creatures as

men, that their iniquities, though against the light of nature, yet flow from a defect in the powers of nature, since 'tis no man's fault that he is not stronger, or wiser, or better, than he was made to be, and therefore, though the light of reason renders him accountable for his actions, yet his want of power to do what his reason approves will make his defects excusable in the sight of his equitable Judge.

See how nearly natural religion and the gospel are allied in the foundation of their hopes and expectations. 'Tis a pity such near friends, who have one common interest, should have any disputes. But disputes there are.

Far be it from us to weaken the hopes of nature. The gospel is no enemy to these hopes; so far otherwise that all the hopes and expectations of nature are so many preparations to the gospel of Christ, and lead us to embrace that mercy offered by Christ which nature so long and so earnestly has sought after. But the question is whether these natural hopes can give us such security of pardon, and of life and immortality, as will justify us in rejecting the light of revelation. Now, whoever depends on the forgiveness of God admits himself to be in a case that wants pardon, that is, admits himself to be a sinner. This being the case of mankind in general, let it be considered,

I. That natural religion could not be originally founded on the consideration of man's being a sinner, and in the expectation of pardon.

It must be allowed that the original religion of nature was agreeable to the original state of nature; and consequently, if natural religion be founded in the consideration of man's sin and weakness, it follows that man was originally formed a sinner and weak.

But further. Supposing men made originally to be what we see they are, upon what grounds are we to hope for an alteration for the better? For, if it was consistent with God's goodness to put men into this state originally, how is it inconsistent with his goodness to continue that state which was at first his own appointment? He could no more act inconsistently with his goodness at the beginning of the world than he can at the end of it. If reason therefore admits the present state of the world to be of God's appointment, it must never afterwards pretend to entertain hopes of being delivered from it, and without such hopes all religion is vain and useless.

It may be thought, perhaps, that supposing the present state of things to be of God's appointment we cannot be answerable for what we do, for why should he blame us for doing the work which he has appointed? Allow this reasoning, yet no religion can be built upon it; for it can go no further than to say that we ought not to be punished for our doings: it can never show that we have any title to be put into a better state; the utmost it can pretend to prove is that we are absolutely unaccountable; and, if so, there is nothing we can do to less purpose than to trouble our heads about religion.

Further, if the laws of nature are the precepts of natural religion, as without all doubt they are, it follows that natural religion can be nothing else but obedience to the laws of nature, and consequently the genuine hopes of natural religion must be founded in obedience. This must necessarily be the case; for all laws are made to be obeyed. No prince was ever so absurd as to make laws with this view, that his subjects might break them, and he show his goodness in pardoning their transgressions; and yet this must have been the scheme of Providence if natural religion was nothing else from the beginning but an expectation of pardon for sin.

II. That the hopes which we are able to form in our present circumstances are too weak and imperfect to give us entire satisfaction.

Let us take a view of our present state without enquiring whether any and what change has happened to put us into this condition; and let us consider what may be expected from our present circumstances. Two things may be affirmed with certainty of the present condition of mankind:—One is that they have a sense of their obligation to obey the laws of reason and nature, which is evident from the force of natural conscience; the other is that very few do in any tolerable degree, and none perfectly, pay this obedience.

Let us examine then how religion will stand upon these circumstances. It is impossible to found the hopes of religion on innocence and obedience; for obedience is not paid. On the other hand, absolute impunity cannot be claimed for all sins, much less can any degree of happiness, either present or future, be claimed on behalf of offenders. The utmost probability to which human reason can arrive in this case is that—the goodness of God and the weakness of man considered—God may favourably accept our endeavours, how imperfect soever our attainments may be. But is this reasoning

built on infallible principles? Can any certainty or security arise out of this—any that can give rest or peace to the mind of man, ever inquisitive after futurity? Will you promise impunity to offenders upon repentance? Impunity, mere impunity, is not the thing that nature seeks after; she craves something more. But can the argument for divine mercy be carried further? Is it not great mercy to pardon sinners? Can you with decency desire a reward for them? Our Saviour tells us that, when we have done our best, “we are but unprofitable servants;” and if we reflect that all our natural powers are the gift of God, and consequently our best services are but a debt paid to the donor,—if we consider that in all we do there is no profit to the Most High, that his power and majesty are not exalted by our services nor lessened by our neglect,—we shall find that our own reason teaches the same lesson, and that when we confess ourselves unprofitable servants we give greater evidence of our understanding than of our humility. And, if this be truly the case, what are the claims of natural religion? Are they not the claims of unprofitable servants—the claims of those to whom nothing is due?

III. That the coming of Christ has supplied these defects, and has perfected and completed the hopes of nature.

Let us take a view of the conditions and promises of the gospel, and see if we have any reason to be offended at them. As to the laws which are made the conditions of our happiness, they are not new impositions, but as old as reason itself, and the very same which natural religion stands bound to obey. Here there can be no complaint, at least no just one. So far then we are quite safe that we can be no losers by the gospel, since it lays no new burden on us. In all other respects our case is extremely altered for the better. We feel ourselves easily tempted to do wrong and unable to pay the obedience we owe to righteousness. Hopes therefore from our innocence we have none, but are forced to have recourse to the mercy of God. Now this mercy for which we hope the gospel offers in the name of God. Have we any reason to suspect the offer, or to reject that very mercy, when promised by God, which our own reason teaches us to expect at his hands?

If we sin, nature has no refuge but in repentance, and how far that will go we know not: nature has not taught, cannot teach us this knowledge. From the gospel we learn that true repentance shall never be in vain, shall not only protect us from punishment, but shall also set open to us the doors of immortality. There you may view religion once more restored to its native hope of glory and life for evermore. You will be no longer obliged to wander in the mazes and intricacies of human reason, and to speculate upon the attributes of divine mercy and justice—the limits and boundaries of which are not to be determined by the wit of man, and the contemplation of which abounds with terrors as well as hopes; but you may see the clear and immutable purpose of God to give salvation to all who, with penitent hearts and a firm reliance on his word, seek after righteousness.

One would imagine the gospel should easily find credit with men, when all its promises do so exactly tally and correspond with the hopes of nature. Has nature any reason to complain of this? Is it an objection to the gospel that it has confirmed all your hopes and expectations, that it has given you the security of God's promise to establish the very wishes of your heart? You trust, you say, that he who made you still retains some love for you. To convince you that he does, he has sent his well-beloved Son into the world to save sinners. Though you offend, yet you hope, on repentance, to be forgiven; the gospel confirms this hope: the terms of it are more beneficial, and convey to true penitents not only hope but a claim to pardon. But pardon only will not satisfy. There is still something further that nature craves, something which with unutterable groans she pants after, even life and happiness for evermore. She sees all her children go down to the grave. All beyond the grave is to her one wide waste, a land of doubt and uncertainty: when she looks into it she has her hopes and she has her fears; and, agitated by the vicissitudes of these passions, she finds no ground whereon to rest her foot. How different is the scene which the gospel opens! There we see the heavenly Canaan, the new Jerusalem, in which city of the Great God there are mansions, many mansions, for receiving those “who through faith and patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality.” Our blessed Saviour has abolished death, and redeemed us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, that we may dwell in his presence as long as eternity itself shall last.

If we were to form a system of religion for ourselves, that should answer to all our wishes and desires, what more could we ask for ourselves than what the gospel has

offered? The obedience required of us is the same to which we are antecedently bound, in virtue of that reason and that understanding which make us to be men. The promises of the gospel extend to more than nature could ever claim. They take in all her wishes and establish all her hopes, and they are offered by a hand that is able to make them good.

The conclusion of the whole is this, that since the religion of a sinner must necessarily be founded in the hopes of mercy,—since these hopes have at best but an uncertain foundation in natural religion and are liable to be disturbed and shaken by frequent doubts and misgivings of mind,—we have great reason to bless and adore the goodness of God, who has openly displayed before our eyes the love that he has to the children of men, by sending “his well-beloved Son into the world, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Besides the purpose for which the foregoing extracts are here given, they may also be referred to as furnishing a good specimen of *propositional* preaching.

When it is not the preacher's intention to dwell upon the objections which may be made to any statement or doctrine which he is discussing, but merely to notice them *en passant*, the proper place of doing this will generally be found in the exordium. Several examples of this kind will be given in the Lectures on EXORDIUMS at the end of this volume; and, instead of giving more examples of the Topic here, I shall turn aside to consider a species of objections to which I think it will be important for every student to pay some attention, in order that he may be prepared to manage them, viz., the objections which many Christians advance against themselves, as to their being believers in Christ. Our old puritan divines were not only careful to guard against objections to their doctrines, but also prompt in replying to the religious fears of Christians touching their interest in such doctrines, and their acceptance with God, in the broad acceptance of that term.

But perhaps it may be objected that this is a species of writing and preaching which leads into a region of thought suited only to weak minds,* that it allows the inference that religion has some real connexion with a gloomy temper—if not worse still, that it is hardly to be distinguished from a distempered understanding, and that when a preacher enters upon these ideas the greater part of the congregation are rather annoyed than benefited, not knowing what he is about. The matter to be ascertained then is this, whether it can happen that a Christian, who has every reason to rejoice, can fall into a state of doubt as to his final state, or even of the readiness of a gracious Providence to supply his temporary necessities, or any other important affair that may appear to cross him in his course and throw him into perplexities? And in what manner does religion recognize such a state? These points may very soon be dismissed in a satisfactory manner.

If facts are to be consulted, we find that the faith of some Christians is comparatively weak, though genuine, and these evince, to our observation and experience, that they are *doubting Christians*; they doubt in the very thing that other Christians unhesitatingly rely upon, and to the great wonder of others who never felt such inconveniences.

If again we consult the philosophy of the human mind, it is obvious that when a thing offers itself to our notice which it is of infinite importance for us to possess and the loss of which nothing can compensate,—if our minds

* Dr. Owen says, “I know some there are that dislike discourses of this nature, and look upon them with contempt and scorn. But why they do so I know not.”

are at all sensitive, wakeful, considerate, active, full of the thought of this infinite good,—it is more than likely that some apprehensions may interpose as to the issue of things, or whether we shall really obtain or miss the blessing. There will be certain vibrations of hope and fear, and the latter may very often preponderate, to our real disquietude. In such a case we naturally look for counsel from those of stronger mind, but who, at some former seasons, have suffered from the same cause; and such persons, if they have Christian feelings, will address the case with the wisdom they have acquired, or with what the nature of the case will admit. Private communications are perhaps best on such subjects; but since the distress may be concealed, and since there may be something common in it to very many Christians, it becomes necessary to introduce the subject in public. No doubt this will be all Arabic to many unawakened hearers, who never felt any disturbance upon the subject; yet the course cannot be dispensed with to please such persons as are in a state of tranquillity and deathly repose.

There is nothing necessarily weak or visionary in a discourse of this nature. Would it not be thought strange if our dear friend's very soul was wrapped up in an only son, if such a youth's life was supposed to be in jeopardy, and we did not, to the utmost of our power, endeavour to console such friend with all the rational hopes that the case admitted? The anguish and vibration of mind that the patriarch Jacob suffered, on parting with his beloved Benjamin, are on record. Again: is it strange that the merchant's hopes and fears should be tremblingly alive for the safety of the ship in which his whole property is embarked, and which none either could or would insure? Certainly not. Thus the Christian's everlasting hopes are embarked; and, considering the imperfection of his present state, it is not strange that he should be the subject of intense anxiety and often of preponderate fears.

We find from scripture, that many good people, in every age, have been the subjects of fears, that the prophets, the psalmist, Christ Jesus himself, and his servants the apostles, were anxious to relieve them by precious promises and holy reasonings. Jesus took their persons under his own wing; he was "touched with the feeling of their infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. "He never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax," Matt. xii. 20. He said, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. Nay, he very tenderly relieved their fears even in providential matters. It is not necessary to multiply citations from scripture on this subject; but, if you will condescend to listen, a few examples shall be recited, drawn from experimental teachers of high and deserved repute, who lived in an age when the sons of consolation abounded.

The usual fears and doubts of Christians generally settle upon what are frequently denominated the evidences of a state of grace, and which are supposed to establish a title to eternal life; now though I may hereafter very freely offer my opinion on this point, yet my present design is to meet the doubts and fears of believers on their own ground, and to show that they are established upon a weakness of judgment and unnecessary severity against themselves. Or perhaps the quotations will do this service for me.

Our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, lays down eight tokens of a gracious state, Matt. v. If they were eight score, a timorous Christian would

establish as many doubts and fears upon them ; yet such fears might be met by Christian compassion. Now suppose Matt. v. 6, "Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness," be the subject selected, Mr. Watson, ejected from Walbrook, says,

This text may serve to comfort the hearts of those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; I doubt not but it is the grief of many a good man that he cannot be more holy, that he cannot serve God better. "Blessed are those that hunger." Though thou hast not so much righteousness as thou wouldst, yet thou art blessed, because thou hungerest after it ; desire is the best discovery of a Christian. Actions may be counterfeited or compulsory. A man may be forced to that which is good, but not to will that which is good ; therefore desire is valuable, and some Christians have nothing to show for themselves but *desires* ; see Neh. i. 11. Let it be observed that hungerings after righteousness proceed from love ; if thou didst not love Christ, thou couldst not desire him.

Here follow the doubts and fears to be guarded against.

OBJECTION : If my hunger were of the right kind, then I could take the comfort of it, but I fear it is counterfeit ; hypocrites have desires.

ANSWER : That I may the better settle a doubting Christian, I shall show the difference between true and false desires, spiritual hunger and carnal.

1. The hypocrite does not desire grace on its own account ; he desires it only as a bridge to lead him over to heaven. So Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous," Num. xxiii. 10. The believer desires grace on its own account, and Christ for himself purely. Not only is heaven precious to him, but Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 7.

2. The hypocrite's desire is conditional : he desires heaven and his sins too : this is his condition. But Christ's conditions are such as believers are willing to accede to, be they what they may. The hypocrites desire the *lease*, but not the *fine* of self-denial.

3. The hypocrite's desires are *but desires* ; they are destitute of activity : but those of the believer are fervent and active, as Isa. xxvi. 9. He presseth his desires with holy violence (Matt. xi. 12) ; and, as the eagle desires the prey (Job ix. 26), so true desires carry the soul swiftly to holy ordinances.

4. The hypocrite's desires are transient, or like a hot fit ; they are soon over. They commence under some affliction ; this over, all is over with him : but true desire is constant. The Greek word is in the participle : "Blessed are those that are *hungering*," though they have righteousness, yet they are hungering after more. The hypocrite's desire is like the motion of a watch, which soon runs down ; but that of the believer is like the beating of the pulse, which lasts as long as life, Ps. cxix. 29. It is like the unextinguished fire of the temple, Lev. vi. 13. "There was," says Cyril, "a mystery in it, to show that we must be ever burning in holy affections."

5. The hypocrites desires are unseasonable, like that of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 11, &c. : but those of the believer are timely and seasonable : see Matt. vi. 33 ; Ps. lxxiii. 1. The wise virgins obtained the oil betimes, before the bridegroom came. Thus we see the difference between a true and false hunger ; the former are blessed, and may take the comfort of it.

OBJECTION : But my hunger after righteousness is so weak that I fear it is not of the true kind.

ANSWER : Though the pulse beats but weakly, yet, if it does beat, it shows there is life. Weak desires are not to be discouraged ; there is a promise made to them, Matt. xii. 20. A reed is a weak thing, but especially when it is bruised ; yet the bruised reed shall not be broken, but, like Aaron's dry rod, it shall bud and blossom. Again : Weak these desires may be, yet the believer may estimate his spiritual state by his judgment as well as by his affections. What is that which thou esteamest most in thy judgment ? Is it Christ and grace ? Thus Paul exercised his judgment, Phil. iii. 8, &c.

OBJECTION : But, saith the believer, that which eclipses my comfort is this : I have not that earnest hunger that I once had. "O that it were with me as in months that are past !"

ANSWER : It is indeed a bad sign for a person to lose his appetite ; but, though it be a sign of the decay of grace to lose the spiritual appetite, yet it is a sign of the truth of grace to bewail the loss. It is sad "to lose our first love," but it is happy when we bemoan the loss. Again : Though this be the case, yet be not too much

discouraged ; for in the use of means thy former appetite may be recovered. In natural instances much feeding takes away appetite, but here feeding on ordinances increases it. The text assures you that if you "*hunger*" or "*thirst*" in any degree (for, as the degree is not in the text, if the reality only exists it carries the promise), you shall be filled (Luke i. 53) with grace, peace, joy.

OBJECTION : I have long had unfeigned desires after God, but yet am not filled.

ANSWER : Thou mayest have great grace, yet little comfort : your patience must be exercised : you have the promise but not the date. The feast is sure ; Isa. xxv. 6—9. And, however it may happen here, be assured you shall be filled in heaven ; *there* there will be "bread enough and to spare ; and there the water-pots will be filled to the brim ;" John ii. 7.

The following occurs in Watson's sermon on Matt. v. 9 : "Blessed are the peace-makers," &c.

The children of God receive manifestations of his love.

OBJECTION : But God is angry with me, and writes bitter things against me ; how does this stand with his love ?

ANSWER : God's love and his anger towards his children may stand together : as many as I love I rebuke and chasten, we have as much need of affliction as of ordinances : a bitter pill may be necessary to restore health. Aristotle speaks of a bird that lives amongst thorns, yet sings sweetly. "A fining pot is for the silver, and the furnace for the gold," not for base metal ; so fiery trials make golden Christians. There is nothing in affliction or even in apparent desertion, that indicates the absence of God's love.

OBJECTION : But sometimes God's children are under the black clouds of desertion ; is not this far from love ?

ANSWER : This is confessedly a sad, but not a hopeless case. When the sun has gone down the dew falls ; when the sun-light of God's countenance is removed tears fall from the eyes of the saints. Job said "The arrows of the Almighty are within me ; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirits," Job vi. 4. Yet the seed remains (1 John iii. 9) which is a seed of comfort as well as a seed of purity. Though they see not the seal of the Spirit, yet they have the unction of the Spirit, 1 John ii. 27. Though they want the sun, yet they have the day-star in their hearts. Like the tree in winter, though it loses its leaves and beauty, yet its sap remains in its root, so there is still the sap of grace, which in time will rise up to clothe the soul again with beauty, and God will yet beautify the meek with salvation. In the mean time it is highly satisfactory that there is a high prizing of God's love—a lamenting after him, and a willingness to forego anything for his return.

My next instance is from the same author, on Matt. xii. 20 : "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

How shall I know that I am savingly bruised ?

ANSWER : Did God ever bring thee upon thy knees ? Hath thy proud heart been humbled ? Didst thou ever see thyself a sinner ? Didst thou with sorrow look upon Christ ? and did those tears drop from the eye of faith ? This is a gospel bruising. Canst thou say, Lord, though I cannot see thee yet I love thee—though I am in the dark, yet I hope ? This is to be a bruised reed.

Then follow the objections and answers.

OBJECTION : But I fear I am not bruised enough.

ANSWER : It is hard to prescribe a just measure of humiliation. It is in the new birth as in the natural ; some experience more pain than others. But would you know when you are bruised enough ? It is when your spirit is so troubled that you are willing to let go those lusts which brought in the greatest income of pleasure and delight. It is when the sin is not only discarded but also loathed. The physic is strong enough when it has purged out the disease.

OBJECTION : I fear I am not bruised as I should be ; I find my heart so hard.

1st ANSWER : We must distinguish between hardness of heart and a hard heart. The best heart may have some hardness, yet not be a hard heart. Denominations are made from the better part. If we come into a field that has tares and wheat in it, we do not call it a field of tares but a field of wheat ; and so in the present case.

2nd ANSWER: There is a great difference between the hardness of the godly and that of the wicked: the one is natural the other accidental; one is the hardness of stone, the other of ice, which soon dissolves.

3rd ANSWER: Dost thou grieve under this hardness? Thou sighest for want of sighs, and weepest for want of tears.

This is a Christian paradox: but strictly true.

OBJECTION: But I am a barren reed, I bring forth no fruit; therefore I fear I shall be broken.

ANSWER: Gracious hearts are apt to overlook the good that is in them: they can spy the worm in the leaf, but not the fruit. Why dost thou say thou art barren? If thou art a bruised reed, thou art not barren. The spiritual reed engrafted into the true vine is fruitful. There is so much sap in Christ as makes all who are inoculated into him bear fruit. Christ distils grace, as drops of dew, upon the soul, Hos. xiii. 5, 6: "I will be as the dew upon Israel; he shall grow as the lily, his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree." That God who made the dry reed blossom, will make the dry reed flourish.

The following extracts are upon the second part of the text—"the smoking flax."

OBJECTION: But we are told not to quench the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19), which implies loss, and that the smoking flax may be quenched.

ANSWER: We must distinguish between the common work of the Spirit and the sanctifying work; the one may be quenched not the other. The former is like a picture drawn upon the ice, soon defaced, the latter like a carving in gold, which endures. The gifts of the Spirit may be quenched not the grace. The enlightening of the Spirit may fail, but not his anointing, 1 John ii. 27. The hypocrite's blaze goes out, not so the sparks of grace: the one is the light of the comet, which wastes and evaporates; the other is the light of a star, &c.

OBJECTION: But I cannot see the least light of grace in myself.

ANSWER: Why dost thou dispute thus against thyself? Why no grace? Thou hast more than thou wouldst be willing to part with, even that which thou valuest above the gold of Ophir. How couldst thou see the lustre of this jewel if the Spirit had not opened thine eyes? Thou wouldst fain believe, and mournest that thou canst not; are not these indications or initials of faith? Thou desirest Christ, canst not be satisfied without him; this beating of the pulse evidenceth life. The iron could not move upward if the loadstone did not draw it. Canst thou not say, "Lord thou knowest that I love thee? This smoking flax the Lord will not quench; it shall be fanned into a flame; thy grace shall flourish in glory."

The following, on the same subject, is from Dr. Robert Smith, preached at Pequea, Pennsylvania, 1758, and inserted in the *Evangelical Preacher*, vol. ii.

I am, says the author, to show you some things that are found in the experience of all true believers, even the *weakest*. They experience a universal change of heart and life; "old things are passed away," &c., 2 Cor. v. 17: the stony heart is removed, Ezek. xxxvi. 16. The Holy Spirit implants a principle of spiritual life in their souls, removes their impenitent hardness, fatal security, stupid blindness, and base propensities, their enmity against God and the gospel method of salvation, discovers divine things in their attractive beauties, and gives them a prevailing bias to that which is good. Hence they act from new principles and from new ends; the love of Christ excites their devotions and all their services. Upon this representation some may start the following objections:—

OBJECTION: Alas! I fear I have never experienced a change of heart; for self and other corruptions not only work in me, but often prevail against me.

ANSWER: Renewing grace makes an effectual but not a perfect change in all the powers of the soul. There are such evils in the best saints, which, upon some suspension of the divine influences, work in and may prevail for a season; yet the promise of Christ secures them against the dominion of sin, that is, its general and allowed sway, Rom. vi. 14. How weak soever their graces or strong their corruptions may sometimes be, believers have an habitual disposedness of heart to God, as their only satisfying portion; and therefore, when their affections are at all misplaced, they can have no peace of mind till they return to and replace their affections on God.

It is clear that true believers, disclaiming their own righteousness, depending en-

tirely on the work of Christ, ought to take comfort ; for weak grace does not differ from strong in the nature of its acts, but in the degree of them ; and here are the proper evidences of a change of heart, and that Christ is the Saviour of such persons.

OBJECTION : Alas ! I have not a comfortable persuasion of an interest in Christ as my Saviour ; therefore I fear I have no true faith.

ANSWER : An interest in Christ is one thing and a well-grounded persuasion of it is another ; the former may be and often is in existence where the latter is not ; therefore you should not conclude that you have no interest in Christ from such want of full persuasion. But, that you may be assisted in clearing up your interest, attend to the following queries :—Do you not look upon yourself as the chief of sinners, and see so many defects in your religious performances that you wonder God does not reject you for these ? Though you are satisfied upon the above point, yet can you acknowledge him as your Lord, and do you not oppose sin as his enemy and yours ? Do you highly esteem an interest in Christ ? and does your esteem of a state of grace flow, not merely from the safety you suppose it affords, but from its excellency, the beauty of the plan of redemption by which it is obtained ? Are you so pleased with this plan that had you ten thousand souls you would desire to venture them all upon it ? Do you see it so worthy of the Majesty of heaven that you would not choose any other method of salvation were it left to your own choice upon what terms you would be saved ? If this be the case, you are indeed believers ; for to be pleased with the plan of salvation through Christ is to consent to take him according to that plan. Are you weary of the unbelief of your hearts, and saying, Lord, what shall I do with this fearful, suspicious heart ? shall I always dispute and stagger ? persuade my soul, good Lord, to rest in thee and on thee ? If so, the Lord Jesus will infallibly bind up your bruised reed and smoking flax.

OBJECTION : I feel sin working in me, and often bringing me into captivity to its law.

ANSWER : Believers obey the law of sin with the flesh, but with the mind the law of God (Rom. vii. 25), yet they do not generally and avowedly, nor can they totally and finally, fall away into sin, because “the seed of God remains in them.” Turn the needle in the compass to what point you please, it will not fix there, but quiver till it points to the pole again ; so, though the saints may be turned off from God by the force of temptation, they cannot be at rest till they point to him again, for he is the centre of their affections. An army may be foiled, and yet not totally routed. Though Satan may, for a season, prevail, yet he cannot destroy the saints ; nor will your hearts cheerfully yield to his commands, but, counting his service a base drudgery, you hate it, and groan to be free from his yoke. I appeal to your consciences whether, upon a calm and deliberate view of the case, you would not choose holiness for its intrinsic beauties, though there was no danger of wrath ? If this be the case, you are indeed holy, whatever weight of corruption you groan under ; and there will ever be a pressing forward to perfection against all difficulties.

OBJECTION : Still it is objected that sad declensions are felt.

ANSWER : Though it is in the nature of grace to grow, yet its growth is not manifest at all times. Thus, in the vegetable kingdom, trees do not seem to grow in winter, yet they grow at their roots, and obtain fresh strength for the coming spring :* so it is with saints in their low estate ; but then they revive again, Hos. xiv. 7. You may not experience the sensible exercises you once had, yet the real habit of grace and love to God may be more fixed, your humility may be deeper, and your real sanctification more substantial.

The following extracts respect the burden of sin.

OBJECTION : I am a very great sinner, or I might hope.

ANSWER : Whom else did Christ come to save ? Whom does Christ justify but the ungodly ?

OBJECTION : But my sins are of no ordinary dye.

ANSWER : And is not Christ's blood of a deeper purple than thy sins ? Is there not more virtue in the one than there can be venom in the other ? What if the devil doth magnify thy sins, canst not thou magnify thy physician ? Cannot God drown thy sins in the ocean of his mercy ?

OBJECTION : But my sins are of long standing.

ANSWER : Dost thou suppose that Christ's blood is only for new and fresh wounds ? We read that Christ not only raised the daughter of Jairus, who was but newly dead,

* Watson has the same idea, as lately quoted.

but Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave and began to putrefy: and has Christ less virtue now in heaven than he had on earth? Judas's despair was worse than his treason. I would not encourage any to go on in sin, but in the midst of gospel light and gospel promises there is no room for any to despair. God can give an old sinner a new heart: he can make springs in the desert. Have not others been set forth as patterns of mercy, who have come in at the twelfth hour? Therefore break off thy league with sin, throw thyself into Christ's arms; say, Lord Jesus, hast not thou said that those who come to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out?

There are besides three great objections which believers make against themselves, as,

OBJECTION: Alas! I cannot tell whether I have faith or no.

ANSWER: Hast thou no faith? How didst thou come to see thy need of it? Thou couldst not see the lack of grace but by the light of grace.

OBJECTION: But surely if I had faith I should discern it.

ANSWER: Thou mayst have faith and not know it. A man may seek for that which he has in his hand. Mary was with Christ, nay, she spoke to him, yet she knew not that it was Christ. Faith often lies concealed in the heart, and we see it not for want of search; the fire lies concealed in the embers, but blow aside the ashes and it is discernible. Faith may be hidden under fears and temptations, but blow the ashes. Thy prizing faith and thy desire of it imply the existence of faith itself.

OBJECTION: But my faith is weak; my hand so trembles that I fear it will hardly lay hold on Christ.

ANSWER 1. A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire; though the pearl of faith be little, yet, if it be a true pearl, it shines in God's eyes. This little grace is the seed of God, and it shall never die; it is a spark only, but it shall live in the ocean of temptation.

ANSWER 2. A weak faith will entitle us to Christ as well as a stronger—"to those that obtained like precious faith with us." Not but that there are degrees of faith. As all faith purifies, so all faith is not alike, one is more than another; this respects sanctification. But, as faith justifies, so faith is all alike precious; the weakest faith justifies as well as that of the most eminent saint.

ANSWER 3. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true faith. The promise does not say, Whoever has a faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouths of lions shall be saved; but, Whoever believes, be his faith ever so small. What are a grain of mustard seed and a bruised reed but emblems of a weak faith? yet the promise is made to these. Jerome, on the beatitudes, remarks, There are many of the promises made to weak grace—"Blessed are the poor in spirit—that mourn—that hunger and thirst," &c.

ANSWER 4. A weak faith may be fruitful: the weakest things do multiply most. The vine is a weak tree, requiring to be borne up and underpropped or secured to a wall; but it so fruitful that in scripture it is made the emblem of fruitfulness. Hence new converts do great things, have strong affections, excellent dispositions; they have the dew of youth, the bloom of future years.

These specimens show us how our predecessors endeavoured to execute many positive injunctions, as Isa. xl. 1; 1 Thess. v. 14; Isa. xxxv. 3, &c. Weak Christians are ever on the watch, during the delivery of a discourse, for even a sentence suitable to their case: and, however excellent the discourse may be in other respects, these weak ones are "sent empty away" if this be wanting. The manner of referring to such topics need not indeed be the same with that of the authors quoted; every age has a language and manner of its own, and every preacher perhaps will have a manner of his own. Still the work must be done, and I hope it will not be esteemed a task but a pleasure (something of the same kind as when we relieve the temporal wants of the needy, where there is more pleasure in giving than receiving), much less would I have the preacher be ashamed of this office; our charities may be done in secret, but let us assist weak Christians openly as well as privately, without the fear of being called canting preachers.

I cannot however close this article without observing that, although the

doubts and fears of the godly have been and are still common to God's family and do to a certain degree afford an evidence of their identity, and prove that no "strange things have happened" to the tempted, and although it is often proper to treat the feelings of weak believers in the manner above described, yet there is a shorter way of dealing with those weak ones than the above examples exhibit, that is, to inculcate the propriety and necessity of their looking off from their frames and feelings to the proper source of all spiritual comfort, the Lord Jesus Christ, Heb. xii. 2. For looking to frames and feelings, or the evidences of grace, for the hope of eternal life, is at best but the lowest kind of comfort that Christians can have—that which is most exposed to the temptations of the great adversary and which is subject to the most frequent variation; like the usual tokens of the wind or the weather, it is one hour propitious, the next threatening. But casting all those away, looking singly on Christ, strictly "walking by faith in him," will in all cases and under all circumstances prove safe and effectual; while the power, grace, and veracity of Christ, will thereby be honoured. The address of Jehoshaphat to his comparatively little army, when about to engage an immense force, is quite to the point. This little army was not to look to the numbers of the enemy, nor to the fears with which such numbers might invest the hearts of the people, but they were to look on high: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper." We are to look to Christ who is the author and finisher of all that forms the matter of our confidence; then peace is sure to follow. The only secure and comfort-giving avenue for us, then, is the broad door of the broad promises: "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the water of life freely." "Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This avenue is free of access; but the private door of feelings and evidences may for a time seem to us to be shut, or not sufficiently open to admit us by it, and here we find all Christian disquietudes and perplexities.

Again, if our faith (in the name of every other grace) be weak, ever so weak, is it not more consistent with our duty to ourselves, instead of ruminating over this defect, to apply ourselves to the aids of the gospel, to look up by prayer for instance, and say, "Lord increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5), "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark ix. 24); and is it not right to persevere in this course continually, that our faith may be increased by exercise? for, as the strength of the arm is increased by use, without doubt every mental and moral faculty is to be invigorated in the same manner. Man is so constituted; and experience teaches us that it must be so. And, on the contrary, it is by *habit* that the Christian's doubts and fears are continually augmented and become more and more insupportable. I question much if any man since the days of the apostles had clearer views of this matter than the late Mr. Romaine, the highly-esteemed author of the *Life of Faith*, &c.; a good deal of excellent advice on this point is concentrated in one of his letters to a friend; it is No. 104 of the seventh volume of edition 1809; and I feel strongly inclined to give an extract from this letter to confirm the observations I have made as to the best course and the shortest to bring weak believers into a state of rest, and which, in many cases at least, is preferable to a course of argumenta-

tion with them on some minor points of their complaint. A physician may very properly sometimes attempt to abate the symptoms of a complaint, but the cure must be effected by striking at the root of the disease : for, when this plan succeeds, the symptoms will abate of themselves. But let us hear Mr. Romaine :—

I received your letter, which contained the state of your case [doubts and fears]. Scarcely a day happens but I meet with some or other in your condition, with exactly the same complaints, arising from the same cause ; but in fact there is nothing in yours or similar cases but what makes strongly for, and nothing against, the true hope of the gospel. A christian must have such anxieties, but in the end, by the teaching of the Spirit, they will have a happy issue.

I observe what you say of your judgment. You are enlightened to see that Jesus is all in all in salvation-work. You unsay these words in the same breath in which you say them ; for because you are not always satisfied of your interest in this salvation, or not always alike comforted with it, you therefore doubt and reason about it being yours. “My judgment is clearly convinced, and (you say) my heart desires to be cast wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation ; but in the act of doing this I always fail.” What reasoning is here ! how directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel ! for you are looking, not at the object of faith—at Jesus, but at your faith. And, because your faith is not quite perfect, you are as much discouraged as if Jesus was not a perfect Saviour. My dear friend, how sadly does the sly spirit of bondage deceive you ! for what is your act of believing ? Is it to save you ? Are you to be saved for believing ? If so, then you put acts and works in the place of the Saviour. And faith, as an act, is in your view part of your salvation. The free grace of the gospel you turn into a work, and how well that work is done becomes the ground of your hope. What a dreadful mistake is this, since salvation is “not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth !” When you so believe on the object of faith peace will follow (Rom. v. 1), not by looking at your faith, but by still viewing the object. But, if you persist in looking on your faith, several evils will result. You will not find peace in this way, for it flies from you ; you will do dishonour to the Saviour by making a saviour of your faith. It is clear, if you could be satisfied with your faith, there would be an interruption of faith itself in its exercise ; and hence a prevention or bar is put to that peace which would otherwise necessarily follow : you lose in this way what you seek, and lose it in your way of seeking ; you want comfort, and you look to your faith for it. If faith could speak, it would say : I have none to give you ; look upon Jesus ; it is all in him. Indeed, my friend, it is. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, will not glorify your faith. He will not give it the honour of comforting you. He takes nothing to comfort you with but the work of Christ, John xvi. 13, 14. This lesson I think he is teaching you, although you pervert it. He is bringing you off from looking legally at your faith. He intends you should not regard, as you have done, *how* you believe, but to settle you in believing. This, then is the manner of your salvation. The divine Father gives Christ to you ; the Holy Spirit brings you to Christ and leads you to trust in him. This is all that faith has to do in the matter : and at best it is but an open empty hand stretched forth at God’s bidding, but Christ so laid hold of is your salvation. It is not faith, but Christ—it is not my hand, but the thing received into my hand, that saves me. I grant you, and I know it well, that much faith brings much comfort from Christ, and carries much glory to him ; but the way to get much faith is not to look at it as you do, but at the Saviour himself—not to look at your hand, but at Jesus, not how you hold him, but that he is yours, and holds you and your faith too, and therefore you “shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.”

After I had observed these errors in your looking at your act of faith, I did not wonder at the following parts of your letter, such as your not being pleased with your faith, and therefore not pleased with your state, nor your graces, nor your attainments, nor your own righteousness, but you thought every thing made against you. Have you nothing to look at but Jesus ? That is right. Then look unto him and be saved, Isa. xlv. 22. Can you see nothing to rest in of your own ? Are you forced to renounce the goodness of your faith as an act ? And do you experience that you cannot be saved for it ? Very well ; hold fast there. Abide by this ; no grace as acted by you can save. Follow this blessed teaching, and cleave with full purpose of heart unto the Lord Jesus. You must learn to make him all your salvation. Know divine

teaching by this mark—that whatever tends to humble you is from the glorifier of Jesus.*

It must here be observed that the case of some Christians will require a very different mode of treatment from the above, in order to check the growth of presumption and false security. Some there are who, though real Christians, have more confidence than is consistent with holy fear. They are constitutionally fearless rather than graciously fearless; these will “rejoice with those that rejoice,” but are unprepared to “weep with those that weep.” They are less vigilant and conscientious in their general walk, and less fruitful in the minor acts of a gracious life, than those who are accounted weaker christians: they possess not so much humble love, or sympathizing care; but they will do greater and bolder acts for Christ than any other class of Christians. They require more of the curb, or they will very likely fall into great errors of faith or practice. Such persons will perhaps enter with zeal and alacrity into any scheme for extending the knowledge of Christ, however arduous: and they will probably, for a time, prosecute it with vigour, but having never seriously counted the cost, nor been conscious of their own weakness, they are speedily dismayed; while the more diffident Christian frequently manifests more stability and perseverance, because he has weighed the difficulties and is prepared to meet them.

LECTURE XXVI.

TOPIC XXIII.

CONSIDER CHARACTERS OF MAJESTY, MEANNESS, INFIRMITY, UTILITY, EVIDENCE, ETC.

On this Topic Claude says, “Take an example from John xiv. 1: ‘Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.’ These words are characterized by a *majesty* which exalts Jesus Christ above all ordinary pastors, and above all the prophets; for who besides the Son of God could say, ‘Believe also in me.’ These words equal Jesus Christ to the eternal Father, and make him the object of our faith and confidence as well as the Father, for they imply that faithful souls may repose an entire confidence in his power, protection, and government, and that the shadow of his wings will dissipate the sorrows of their minds, and leave no room for fear.

“You see also a character of *tenderness* and infinite love towards his disciples, which appears in the assurance with which he inspires them, and in the promise which he tacitly makes them of always powerfully supporting and never forsaking them. The same characters, or others like them, may be observed in all this discourse of our Saviour, which goes on to the end of the sixteenth chapter: As in these words: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life;’ in these: ‘He that hath seen me, Philip, hath seen the Father;’—in these: ‘Whatsoever you ask in my name, I will do it;’ again in these: ‘I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.’ In general, we see almost in every verse majesty, tenderness, love of holiness, confidence of victory, and other such characters, which it is important to remark.

* See Baxter’s *Saint’s Rest*, ch. viii. to which Romaine seems to have been indebted. See also Rawlin on Justification, Notes from Whitby, and Dr. Goodwin, for much information on this most important point of divinity.

“MEANNESS AND INFIRMITY.—You will very often observe characters of *meanness* and *infirmity* in the words and actions of the disciples of Jesus Christ ; as when they asked him, ‘Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ Acts i. 6. You see, even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were full of that low and carnal idea which they had entertained of a temporal Messiah.

“You also see a *rash curiosity* in their desiring to know the times and the seasons of those great events which God thought fit to conceal.

“Observe, again, Peter’s vision. A great sheet was let down from heaven, and filled with all sorts of animals ; a voice said to him, ‘Rise, Peter, kill and eat,’ to which he answered, ‘Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten any thing that is common and unclean.’ You see in this answer an *over-scrupulous conscience*, all embarrassed with legal ceremonies, and a very defective and imperfect knowledge of gospel liberty.

“There is almost an infinite number of texts in the New Testament where such infirmities appear ; and you must not fail to remark them in order to prove, 1. That grace is compatible with much human weakness 2. That heavenly light arises by degrees upon the mind, and that it is with the new man, as with the natural man, who is born an infant, lisps in his childhood, and arrives at perfection insensibly and by little and little ; 3. That the strongest and furthest advanced Christians ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, since God himself does not ‘break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.’ This he was pleased to exemplify in the most ample manner in the person of Jesus Christ, when he was upon earth.

“NECESSITY.—In regard to *necessity*, you may very often remark this in explaining the doctrines of religion ; as when you speak of the mission of Jesus Christ into the world—of his familiar conversation with men—of his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, &c. ; for you may not only consider the *truth*, but also the *necessity* of each, and by this means open a most beautiful field of theological argument and elucidation.

“The same may be affirmed of sending the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost, into the world. In explaining these words, ‘I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter’ (John xiv. 16), you may very properly consider the necessity of this *Comforter*, either because without his light and help we can never release ourselves from the bondage of sin and Satan, or because without his assistance all that Jesus Christ has done in the economy of salvation would be entirely useless to us. You may also observe the necessity of his *eternal abode* with us : because it is not enough to be once converted by his efficacious power ; we need his continual presence and efficacy to carry on and finish the work of sanctification, otherwise we should quickly relapse into our first condition.

“UTILITY.—Where a thing does not appear absolutely necessary, you may remark its *utility* ; as in some particular miracles of Jesus Christ, in some peculiar afflictions of the faithful, in the manner in which St. Paul was converted, and in an infinite number of subjects which present themselves to a preacher to be discussed.

“EVIDENCE.—Evidence must be particularly pressed in articles which are disputed, or which are likely to be controverted. For example : Were you to treat of the second commandment, in opposition to the custom and practice of worshipping images in the church of Rome, you should press the *evidence* of the words. As, 1. It has pleased God to place this command, not

in some obscure part of revelation, but in the *moral law*, in that law every word of which he caused to proceed from the midst of the flames. 2. He uses not only the term *image*, but *likeness*, and specifies even the likenesses of all the things in the world, of those which are *in heaven above*, of those which are *in the earth beneath*, and of those which are *under the earth*. 3. In order to prevent all the frivolous objections of the human mind, he goes yet further, not only forbidding the *worshipping* of them, but also the making *use* of them in any manner of way ; and, which is more, he even forbids the *making* of them : 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Thou shalt not serve them. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,' &c. 4. Add to all this that the Lord subjoined the highest *interests* to enforce it. He interested herein his majesty, his covenant, and his infinite power ; 'For,' says he, 'I am Jehovah, thy God.' He goes further, and interests his jealousy, that is, that inexorable justice which avenges affronts offered to his love. Yea, in order to touch us still more sensibly, he even goes so far as to interest our children, threatening us with that terrible wrath which does not end with the parents, but passes down to their posterity. What could the Lord say more plainly and evidently to show that he would suffer no image in his religious worship ? After all this, is it not the most criminal presumption to undertake to distinguish, in order to elude the force of this commandment ?

"You may, if you choose, over and above all this, add Moses's explication of this command in the fourth of Deuteronomy.

"You may also use the same character of *evidence* when you explain several passages which adversaries abuse ; as these words, 'This is my body, which is broken for you,' and these in the sixth of John : 'Eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ;' and those passages also in St. James which speak of justification by works ; for, in treating these passages in opposition to the false senses which the church of Rome gives of them, you must assemble many circumstances, and place each in its proper light, so that altogether they may diffuse a great brightness upon the text, and clearly show its true sense."

To the separate illustration of the several points comprehended in this Topic, it does not appear necessary to add anything to the above remarks. Some general observations which appear to be within the spirit of the Topic may not, however, be unacceptable.

The design of the Topic is to lead us to discriminate, and to improve by way of *comment*, or otherwise, the particular *qualities* of majesty, &c., discoverable in any statement. This is the philosophy of the textuarian, and must precede every operation of a divisional nature. The fact or truth of a text is generally easily discovered by the interrogations, or by reducing the text to its more natural order, which answers the purposes of Claude's and Simeon's categorical reductions, and which stands sufficiently exemplified in our regular division. But the *qualities* of a passage of scripture form a separate study.

What I have here presumed to call *qualities* other authors call by different names. Dr. Watts calls them *modes* and *accidents*. Mr. Simeon, more to our purpose, marks the *character* and *spirit* of a passage ; I also still think it will be allowed that the character and spirit of any speech or writing is to be learned or spelled out from the qualities discoverable in such speech or writing ; qualities first strike the mind and determine the name

or character. The qualities of a sentence, either expressed or conceived, lead us to the thought itself, the point, or, if you please, the spirit of the text. If we speak of *character* it comes to the same point, the qualities either expressed or understood constitute the character : thus, if we would show what the character of wisdom is (Isa. xxxiii. 6), we must go into a specification of its qualities.* St. James describes these, iii. 17. Qualities may direct to an end, as having certain tendencies towards it ; as luxury, the qualities of which tend to destroy the constitution, and waste a man's fortune. The qualities of self-denial, or of temperance, chastity, &c., naturally tend to the perfection of the Christian character, and each may be considered in this view on a suitable text. So that all qualities are discriminative of the subject to which they belong, or they lead to the subject itself.

Another use which we may make of our Topic is to find out, from the qualities of the subject, an appropriate title or heading of a discourse. This may appear to be a very trifling subject, not here worth consideration. I allow that by the heading lines of some sermons any one might be led to suppose that their authors thought so. But the title to a sermon is of great consequence, not indeed to set it off to the best advantage, nor merely as a matter of accuracy, but in its practical results. If the title be judiciously fixed upon, either written or understood, or conceived in the preacher's mind, he feels himself thereby confined to consistency, he feels that he must keep to his title, which is even a closer point than his text, while the announcement of the title tends also to keep the hearer's or reader's mind steady to the point in hand.

The three kinds or varieties of titles seem to me to be these :—

First : The subject or character of the text. Acts xx. 26, 27 : "I take you to record this day," &c. Here the subject is *Ministerial Fidelity*. The author shows, Wherein it consists—the difficulty of maintaining it—its immense importance. Here we see how closely every division connects with the title.

Again, Titus i. 16 : "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." The character which forms the subject and suggests the title is *The False Professor*. This is a common character—an awful character—a pitiable character.

Secondly : The end or object of a text, and consequently of the discourse. 1 Tim. i. 5 : "Now the end of the commandment is charity." The title is *The True End of the Gospel*. Then enquire, What is the true scope of the gospel as contrasted with the use too often made of it?—When may that end be said to be truly and properly attained? Here the title might have been formed on the general subject—*Christian Charity* ; but in this case a different mode of discussion would have been required.

Again, Gal. i. 4 : "Who gave himself," &c. Here the title is, *The Great Object of Christ's Coming*.

Again, Rom. vi. 1—4 : "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Here the title may form a proposition—*The Gospel secures Holiness*. Then the preacher might properly discuss the subject under two other propositions, viz.—The supposed tendency of the gospel to licentiousness is not true—the security it gives for the practice of holiness is most manifest, for the reasons laid down in the subsequent part of the text.

* Perhaps my illustrations of Descriptive Preaching might with great propriety have been grounded on this Topic, rather than on the third Topic, but *Quod scripsi scripsit*.

Thus we see that the subject, or the end and design of things, may become the proper material of titles, with all their variations or forms of expression : but that which I am anxious to enforce is that we may be greatly assisted in devising titles by considering *qualities*, the only proper point of my present Lecture. The title *must* be upon qualities if these form the strongest points of a discourse ; for here the preacher's business is to treat of these qualities—their variety, extent, mode of acting, benefits or detriments, with all the sensation they excite of admiration or disgust, &c. Besides, I cannot but think that there is something very judicious, perhaps even elegant, in such titles. Take, for example, 1 Tim. iv. 8, 9 : “Godliness is profitable unto all things.” The title is, *The Advantages of true Godliness*. Here profitableness, in relation to this life and that which is to come, is singled out from the numerous and excellent qualities of godliness. Had the title assigned to the discourse been *On True Godliness*, it would have been correct, but not judicious ; for the main point of the text turns on the fact that true godliness is advantageous ; and I would even sacrifice elegance to precision in any such case. It is the profitable quality of godliness that I had in my eye in preparing the discourse, and it is to this I desire the chief attention of the hearer ; for this especially is favourable to the very strongest principles of our common nature, self-interest and self-preservation.

Or take Heb. iv. 12 : “The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” I have quoted this text at full length to show the *many* qualities of the divine word. Now here there is no unnecessary redundancy of expression. Every quality is but a just amplification of the subject ; it is *quick, powerful, sharp, very sharp, piercing* ; it separates and divides all the parts of the spiritual anatomy of the soul ; it discerns (throws open) all the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The former example had but one quality named in it, but this has so many that there seems to be some difficulty in forming a title sufficiently comprehensive. Perhaps we cannot do better in such a case than to take the leading quality as a title : *The Energy or Power of God's Word*.

2 Cor. xi. 29 : “Who is weak, and I am not weak,” &c. The title to this may be *Christian Sympathy*, because this is the spirit that breathes in the language of the text.

In this Topic, besides the direct uses which I have endeavoured to point out, we also find the chief elements of criticism, or the principal points upon which the judgment is to be exercised in order to determine the degree of excellency, or otherwise, attaching to any literary production : hence it has been said, “He is of a learned spirit that dives into all qualities, and ascertains all movements of the mind.”

Unless we are wrapped in indolence or apathy, we cannot well read a book or hear a speech without forming some opinion as to what are its qualities.* As there are certain personal qualities peculiar to certain individuals, and to describe these is to *characterize* the man, so there are certain peculiarities which belong to expression or discourse. There are as many of these as there are intelligent emotions which express themselves in language.

* See Bickersteth's Characters of great Authors.

Every thought has its quality, and diligence must find it out.* Besides such as the title of our Topic points out, they are rational or absurd, affectionate or malignant, amiable or disgusting, beautiful or deformed, clear or confused, argumentative or loose or in want of connexion; they are full or defective, true or false, important or trivial, diffuse or laconic, cold or fervid, sublime or mean; they are suitable or misplaced, profound or frivolous, benignant or severe; they are haughty or condescending, chaste or licentious, good or evil. Every thing that the scripture approves or condemns, every passion, habit, or sense, has its respective award, according to its use or tendency; every thing in divinity and morals, every thing pertaining to the religious and social life, every thing that comes into the province of truth, into the offices and relations of man, has its qualities, which form its characteristics. These are the elements upon which our learned critics give the sentence of death or life to our multitudinous publications. In some cases it may be the happiness of poor authors to be beneath their regard. In other and more happy instances they give the authors the benefit of their *imprimatur*, and thus give currency to works of real merit. I do not say that critics are solely engaged in the consideration of qualities. They have to consider the things themselves to which qualities are only relative. They detect imposture, and bring to light many realities which are worthy of their laborious research. They establish as far as they can the standard of excellency and truth in reference to the work before them, and show the *quantum* of merit that belongs to the author. They consider the claim that an author has to public favour, what of novelty he produces, whether the subject be in want of discussion or is exhausted and threadbare, whether he brings some old but valuable subject into a new or improved light, how far the work is adapted to the persons had in view, &c. If a work be worth entertaining they will perhaps point out what would improve it, and especially if the author is but recently before the public. But the power which our brother critics possess over the public mind is chiefly ascribable to a just discovery of the qualities exhibited in an author. It is therefore of considerable importance that this Topic should be borne in mind in the perusal of any human performance, religious or literary; for the rules which direct our public critics must also direct us in the perusal of any work, that we may be able to form a correct judgment respecting it.

In reading theological works we should carefully mark whether they amplify the text of scripture, or discover the connexion of its several parts, or explain the meaning of the Spirit of God where difficulties appear, or throw out some hidden beauties, &c. A work which renders us these and such like services is worthy of high regard. But some of our great readers will travel through many bulky volumes, and if you ask them what are the excellences, faults, or defects which they found, you will obtain only some vague and general answer, which demonstrates that they are book readers, and that is nearly all; but the man who reads for profit "marks, learns, and inwardly digests" what he finds. He examines the particular view of his author, his arrangement, and his arguments and illustrations, and particularly what are the qualities predominant in his author. His keen and steady eye suffers nothing to escape him: he would rather read a little, upon this plan, than reckon the value of his studies by the quantity of pages he has perused. Like the bee, he rests long enough upon each

* We naturally form our contrasts chiefly from qualities.

flower to extract its virtues. He marks particular parts with his pencil, or makes some extracts to throw into his common-place book, or notes in the margin of his Bible what book to refer to on particular passages, the volume and the page. In the course of time the broad margin of his Bible* becomes a little treasury. This has been my practice for some years, and on many occasions I have found it a very seasonable assistance; though perhaps I have not been sufficiently industrious, for I see many leaves vacant which might have been supplied. Now in general the closer the student keeps to the qualities of his author the more he will be improved. He will be furnished perhaps with an opening to his own faults in preaching, and those points of excellence which he should endeavour to imitate: his taste will improve, his imagination become more vigorous, his judgment more correct. The student who obtains this accurate knowledge of books will resemble a merchant on 'change, who knows pretty nearly the value of every one on his walk. If his library be small, it will be select; it will contain no literary rubbish, or, if he should have any such commodities, they will be known by the dust that covers them or by the remote place they occupy.

LECTURE XXVII.

TOPIC XXIV.

REMARK DEGREES.

"For example, Gal. i. 8: 'If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' After you have remarked the extreme force and significance of the words, observe that the apostle denounces an anathema *twice*, even denouncing it against *himself*, should he ever be guilty of what he condemns, denouncing it even against an *angel* from heaven, in the same case. You must observe that the apostle does not always use the same vehemence when he speaks against error. In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he contents himself with calling those "weak in the faith" who eat only herbs, and exhorts other believers to bear with them. In the third chapter of the First of Corinthians he protests to those who build with wood, hay, and stubble, upon Christ the foundation, that their work should be burnt, but that they should be saved, though it should be by fire. In the seventeenth chapter of Acts we are told "that Paul's spirit was stirred" when he saw the idolatry and superstition of the Athenians. Elsewhere he says, 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.' In all these there is a force; but nothing like what appears in these reiterated words: 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' 'As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' Why so? Because the apostle speaks here of an *essential* corruption of the gospel, which the false apostles aimed at in the churches of Galatia; they were annihilating the grace of Christ, by associating with it the Mosaic economy. They aimed at the entire ruin of the church, by debasing the purity of its doctrines. In this case, the conscience of this good man could

* The Bible for this purpose should be wide in the margin, or interleaved.

contain no longer ; he stretched his zeal and vehemence as far as possible ; he became inexorable, and pronounced anathemas. Nothing prevented him ; neither the authority of the greatest men nor yet the dignity of the glorious angels : ' If even an angel from heaven preach any other gospel let him be accursed.' "

Such were Claude's ideas. I admire Paul's zeal, and I approve very highly of Claude's observations upon it. Neither St. Paul nor Claude give any offence, because the matter is now past ; but, if a subverter of gospel truths or precepts were in the present day to be thus boldly attacked, I have no doubt but the champion for truth would be assailed as unchristian, censorious, illiberal, and narrow-minded, and this by the very men who express their approbation of Paul's conduct. The Pharisees pretended to venerate the prophets, and honoured their sepulchres ; but, when a prophet of infinite purity and divine authority reproved their unbelief and hypocrisy, they assailed him with abusive epithets, and at length took away his life. In short, the living reprover is sure to be an offender ; while one who reproves by his writings will have his name honoured.

" Degree is the comparative condition of any thing, and the study of this Topic is necessary to the obtaining of *accuracy* in theology. An accurate sermon is a discourse made up of an exact *quantity* of each component part. There is a certain degree or quantum of truth ; there is an exact point of light, or degree of *evidence*, in which this truth is placed ; there is a nice *quantum sufficit* of *imagery*, colouring and enlivening the evidence ; there is a nice degree of *temper* adjusted to all parts ; the reasoning is vigorous, the narration cool, the suasion pathetic, soft, and warm, and so on : there is a sort of *style* adapted to the subject, and there is a degree of vehemence or indifference in the very *words* or *letters* that express the whole, suited to the importance or the comparative insignificance of each part. The composition of such a sermon is a work of great labour, and yet it must not appear to be laboured at all. And, although this may be carried to such excess that the composition of sermons by these great labours would nearly exclude other parts of the ministerial office, yet some attention to *degrees* is essential in studying scripture, in investigating and reasoning upon subjects, in determining the direction of promises and threatenings, in relieving troubled consciences, and so on. There are degrees of punishment pointed against degrees of sin, degrees of glory adapted to degrees of virtue, degrees of assurance proportioned to degrees of faith," &c.*

Marking degrees is certainly very essential to an expositor, who should have a philosophical as well as a Christian mind. On many occasions it is not enough to mark the qualities of a subject, but these must also be distinguished according to their different degrees ; for every quality has its degree as well as its kind. There is a good, better, best—a bad, worse, worst, &c. There are degrees of majesty, meanness, infirmity, necessity, utility, &c. " There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ;" for these luminaries differ in the degree of their light and excellence.

If the eye be passed over the last Lecture, it will appear how great the variety of qualities is, and by this Topic the *degree* of such qualities will necessarily fall under consideration, whereby discrimination is rendered more complete, and we are preserved from a loose manner of address, and enabled to give every thing its due weight and measure.

* Robinson's Claude, vol ii.

Some examples are given under the second Topic* which may here be referred to as illustrating the present Topic also, and I shall only add one instance from Simeon of a somewhat different kind. It is on Rom. i. 8: "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all." The apostle had received a very favourable account of the spiritual state of the church at Rome, of the whole church generally, and which indeed stood confirmed by universal testimony. "We therefore," says he, "give thanks to God for you all."

I. We give thanks for those among you who have begun to manifest a concern for your souls. Truly this is a just ground of thanksgiving to God. A most felicitous escape you have had from the society you have left, the sins you have begun to renounce, &c. God only must have the glory. He quickened you when dead, endowed you with new dispositions, gave you a new work, placed you under new influences, and gave you new objects.

II. But with greater delight will we return thanks for those who have made some progress in the divine life. Over such of you we rejoice with very exalted joy; for many who run well for a season leave off to behave themselves wisely, and, after having known the way of righteousness, forsake it. It is therefore our joy that you stand fast in the Lord, and on your account we rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, who has secured your stability and growth in grace.

III. Most of all must we bless God for those among you who are walking worthy of their high and heavenly calling. To such our text more especially refers, because the apostle states, as the ground of his thanksgiving, "that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." Now for such we thank God,

1. Because of the glory which they bring to God. They live for God; they commend his religion. Such are in fact the lights of the world, and those who behold them are constrained to "glorify their Father who is in heaven."

2. Because of the good which they do to mankind. These lead the way, encourage, teach, and instruct others, commence plans of usefulness and carry them on. Works of *humanity* might be originated by others; but works of *religion* would fail if such Christians did not exert themselves.

3. Because of the blessings that await them in a better world. We thank God for your prospects.

TOPIC XXV.

OBSERVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

"Thus," says Claude, "if you were explaining the miracle which Jesus Christ wrought in the synagogue on the sabbath-day, when he healed the withered hand in the presence of the Herodians and Pharisees, you might remark the different *interests* of the spectators in that act of our Lord; for, on the one hand, Moses and his religion seemed interested therein two ways:—1. The miracle was wrought on a *day* in which Moses had commanded them to do no manner of work. And, 2. This was done in a *synagogue* consecrated to the Mosaic worship: so that it was, as it were, insulting Moses in his own house. Further, the Herodians, who were particularly attached to the person of Herod, either for political reasons or for some others unknown, were obliged to be offended; for this miracle had a tendency to prove Christ's Messiahship, and thereby (as was commonly thought) his right to the kingdom of Israel; and consequently this must tend to blacken the memory of a former Herod, who endeavoured to kill him in his infancy. The Pharisees were no less interested; for they considered him as their reprobator and enemy, and could not help being very much troubled whenever they saw Jesus Christ work a miracle. Then observe the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ: his concern was to do good wherever he had an opportunity,

* See page 149 of this work.

and to glorify God his Father by confirming the word of his gospel by acts of infinite power. The poor, afflicted man had a double interest in it : The healing of his body and the improvement of his mind. Thus this action of Jesus Christ, having divers relations, becomes, as it were, a point whence many lines may be drawn, some on this side, others on that ; and hence arise the different remarks which may be made upon it."

This article, like the last, is of small comparative importance, yet the accurate expositor will not despise its aid. However, I have not been able to discover a single example of any value upon this Topic, and shall only add what Mr. Robinson supplied, and attached to his original translation of Claude, which will not be quite without its use to many students, for this work I believe is out of print and is in but few hands.

Mr. Robinson says : " This beautiful Topic of illustration may serve for a clue to many passages of scripture, to almost all history, profane, and sacred, and to numberless affairs which are daily transacted before our eyes. It proves that different men have different interests, and divers interests lead to different sentiments. Suppose a man to place all his happiness in sensual gratifications, the gratifying of his senses will become his main interest, and this disposition will beguile his reason and form his opinions. Suppose another to place his glory in popular applause, this passion for vulgar praise will make him avoid a profession, yea, an examination of truth, lest it should tarnish his beauty in the public eye. Suppose even a good man under a momentary unworthy influence, and for that moment he will pursue a track contrary to his general course of action and do for a moment what he has hated for a month."

Interests and sentiments have different origins : some are gracious, some natural ; some spring from education, habit, passion, or prejudice ; and many so blindly fall into different interests that if you were to ask them why they have attached themselves, in the manner they have done, to this side or that, they would think it a very strange question. I may add, as different interests sometimes divide men, so at other times they fall into one common interest and unite them. The Pharisees hated the Herodians, and Herod detested Pilate ; yet all agreed in opposing and destroying Jesus Christ ; and in discoursing on such passages as Luke xxiii. 12, and Matt. xxii. 16, this fact should not be overlooked.

The two following examples of the use of this Topic by Massillon,* are pointed out by Mr. Robinson :—

Luke ii. 14 : " Glory to God in the highest," &c.

- I. God's glory was concerned in the birth of Christ.
 1. Idolatry had transferred that worship to itself which was due only to God.
 2. Formality prevailed among the Jews, and they rendered an obnoxious worship to the God of their forefathers.
 3. Philosophy had conveyed away the glory of his providence and eternal wisdom.
- These were three daring insults which mankind offered to God, and which Christ came to remove.
- II. The peace of mankind was interested in Christ's birth ; for they had robbed one another of peace by pride, by voluptuousness, by revenge. Christ's grace heals the first, his doctrine the second, his example the last.

Matt. ii. 2 : " We have seen his star, and have come to worship him."

The star, like the gospel, directing to Christ, meets with worshippers in the wise men,

* Massillon was a celebrated French bishop, highly prized in the court of Louis XIV., and one of the preachers of that day who fixed the modern standard of preaching.

in the priests dissemblers, in Herod a persecutor. So it is with the gospel now: a few receive it, many disguise it, more still despise and persecute it. This leads us to treat,

I. Of the truth admitted.

II. The truth disguised.

III. The truth persecuted, by the practice of libertines, whose conduct runs it down; by people of pleasure, who exaggerate their own happiness and the difficulties of Christianity; or by fools, who mock and deride it.

TOPIC XXVI.

DISTINGUISH, DEFINE, DIVIDE.

DISTINGUISH.—"To speak properly," says Claude, "we distinguish when we consider a thing in different views. As for example: Faith is considered either objectively or subjectively.* In the view of its *object* faith is the work of Jesus Christ; his word and his cross produce it, for take away the death of Christ Jesus and there is no more faith. His resurrection also is the cause of it. 'If Jesus Christ be not raised, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins.' But, if you consider faith in regard to its *subject*, it is the work of the Holy Ghost. So again, to use the same example, faith may be considered with a view to *justification*, or with a view to *sanctification*. In the former view it is opposed to works; in the latter it is the principle and cause of all good works. Thus man may be considered with reference to *civil society*, by which he is obliged to particular duties and partakes of corresponding advantages, or he may be considered with respect to *church fellowship*, and so he is subject to Christian laws and enjoys Christian privileges."

In theological debates nothing can be of greater consequence than just and necessary distinctions. Confusion of ideas and arguments only leads to endless and fruitless debates. It would not be difficult to select from our controversial writers a multitude of examples in which, in consequence of not fairly distinguishing or disentangling the point in debate, the disputants have affirmed one thing and proved another, and so demonstrated nothing but their own unfitness for controversy. In conducting debates, opportunity will often arise for showing that an opponent has confounded together two things which, though they possess some properties in common, are nevertheless so materially different in other points as to render his argument inapplicable to the subject in hand, and, whenever this can be done, it will give a great advantage.

Our pleaders at the bar often make this use of this Topic, "Gentlemen of the jury, what my learned brother has told you is no doubt perfectly correct, according to the cases which he has cited; but these cases turned upon a different point, and have no manner of relation to the point you are called upon to decide. The circumstances, also, of the one and the other are quite different, and require a very different decision." So with regard to disputed doctrine. If we take a doctrine only in the view given by those who differ from us, there may be some truth in it, but then the representation may not be a fair one: it may proceed upon suppositions which we cannot allow; it may be intrenched in a set of proofs which are not applicable to it, and

* In preaching, care should be taken to state the necessary distinctions in a more intelligible way than by the terms *object* and *subject*: these to the majority of hearers are mere mystical expressions.

may involve a state of things quite the contrary of what our experience teaches us and what scripture affirms.*

The confounding of one subject with another has in fact given rise to most of the errors which are to be found in the Christian church: as may be seen in the church of Rome especially, where penance is confounded with repentance, and the absolution of the priest with the pardon of heaven, &c.

Whenever we perceive a subject to possess several qualities which differ greatly from one another, it will frequently be proper to distinguish between them before we can proceed to a judicious treatment of the subject.† Where one subject possesses properties which bear some general resemblance to those of other subjects, this Topic is also required. You must also frequently point out with precision and force the distinction between a mere profession of religion and true piety: too often these are confounded together, and it is the preacher's duty, not only to state that the form is valueless without the spirit of godliness, but to show what it is that constitutes the distinction. The weak believer must also be distinguished from the mere professor, the designing hypocrite from the self-deceiving pharisee, &c. One of the best means of acquiring that discriminating talent which is necessary to enable you to distinguish with accuracy is to study the works of very acute writers, who, without departing from simplicity of style, have stated in a few intelligible sentences what others draw out into a long exhibition of unintelligibles.‡

Lavington makes a very judicious distinction on the subject of communion with our own hearts. "It is," says he, "1. *Direct*—when the understanding and will debate on the subject of good and evil in prospect. Here we debate with our own heart whether the thing be really lawful or not. 2. By way of *reflection*. Here we can commune with our heart as to the past, whether a thing that has been done is such as conscience does and ought to approve." The author again distinguishes between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* occasions that call for such strict scrutiny. All this representation is practical and plain. Farquhar has a similar example.

Robinson has also introduced, from the French, a very striking instance, on Heb. ii. 14, 15. Some persons are, "through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage." These persons must be *distinguished*—1. Some fear death from a pure instinct of nature. 2. Some from a principle of religion, having a suspicion of their state. 3. Some from a spirit of infidelity, mere want of faith. 4. Some from an attachment to this world. And 5. Others from a mere weakness of the imagination.§

The following is an example of observation on the Topic, by Jortin, on Rom. ii. 11.

To clear divine impartiality from objections arising from different capacities and conditions, we must form a right notion of what is called "*respect of persons*;" to do this we must distinguish between matters of favour and matters of justice.

The manner of God's dealings with his creatures in giving them more or less, in placing them here or there when he calls them into being, is matter of favour. No account should be asked or expected. What is called respect of persons has nothing to do with it. But, in his behaviour to creatures consequent on their behaviour to him, he acts by the rules of

* See Robert Hall's Works, vol. vi.

† See Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, Lect. xxxi.

‡ It has been remarked of Henry that, in his commentary, he often makes some very learned remarks and just distinctions in a very familiar manner, without appearing learned.

§ Bertheau, tom. ii., serm. 12.

justice and equity. In this case justice and equity will be so manifest as to clear him from the imputation of partiality.

If you examine the passages of scripture where God is said to be "no respecter of persons," you will find this character ascribed to him, not as he is creator, but as he is ruler and judge, as he is dispenser of rewards and punishments. So men, when they are commanded not to respect persons, are to be considered not as doing favour, but as exercising authority, judgment, and justice, in a public or private capacity, &c.

I add a very important distinction which it will be advantageous to keep in mind in the discussion of many subjects :—

The gospel of Christ is thought by many to be a source of evil, and certain it is that evils have not unfrequently followed in its train. But we must distinguish between two things which are very often confounded; namely, the *cause* of the evil and the *occasion* of it. There is not any blessing that divine Providence has bestowed upon us which may not be an occasion of evil, if it be not used in the manner and for the ends for which it was intended. Our corporeal and mental faculties may all be abused for the production of evil; and all the fruits of the earth may be made subservient to the gratification of inordinate desire. This has happened in relation to the gospel. Even in the primitive churches some, instead of delivering their divine message with the simplicity that became them, made it, in many instances, an occasion of promulgating their own vain and superstitious notions, thus administering to strife and contention, where they should have laboured only for the edification of souls in faith and love. St. Paul, in order to correct this, directed Timothy to protest against it as an abuse of the gospel, and to make it appear that the gospel was in no respect to be blamed for these evils, since, in its own nature, it tended only to love. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

Simeon avails himself of this Topic in discoursing on the divinity of Christ, from Col. ii. 9. Under his first division he observes,

There are some texts which, to a superficial observer, bear somewhat of a similar aspect with that before us. For instance, it is said in this very epistle, "It hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell" (i. 19); and out of his fulness we are said to receive, even grace for grace, John i. 16. There is yet a stronger expression in the epistle to the Ephesians, wherein we are exhorted to contemplate the love of Christ till we are "filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 18, 19. Nay more, we are said ourselves to be "the fulness of him who filleth all in all." From such scriptures as these it is argued, by many, that the fulness spoken of in my text is only a fulness of gifts committed to Christ for the use of his church, and that we may as well assume to ourselves the character of the Godhead as give it to him, since we, no less than he, are said to be "filled with all the fulness of God." But, on a closer inspection, there will be found a wide difference between all the foregoing passages and our text. The fulness spoken of in the text is the fulness of "the Godhead," residing in Christ, not symbolically and for a season, as the Shechinah did in the tabernacle, but corporeally, substantially, permanently. There is no doubt a reference here to the Shechinah, which was a shadowy representation of the Deity. But the reference is rather in a way of contrast than of comparison; for in my text it is not *God* who is spoken of, and who is frequently said to dwell in his people, but the *Godhead*. Nor is Christ said to "*be filled with*" it, but to have it *essentially dwelling* in him; and this, not in a type or shadow, but really, vitally, necessarily, immutably: "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Saurin on Eccl. i. 9—"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun"—enters into some distinctions in order to fix the meaning of the text.

1. When the wise man says that *which hath been is that which shall be*, he doth not mean to attribute a character of firmness and consistency to such events as concern us. No man ever knew better than he the transitoriness of human affairs: but it is not necessary to our knowledge of the subject to occupy a post as eminent as that which he held; for a superficial view of the condition of public bodies and of that of individuals will be sufficient to open a wide field to our reflections.

(1.) The condition of public bodies is usually founded on materials so brittle that there is no room to be astonished at sudden and perpetual variations. A spectator young in his

observations, and distant from the central point, is amazed at the rapid changes which he beholds suddenly take place like the creation of new worlds; he supposed whole ages must pass in removing those enormous masses—public bodies—and in turning the current of prosperity and victory. But, should he penetrate into the spring of events, he would soon find that a very small and inconsiderable point gave motion to that wheel on which turned public prosperity and public adversity, and which gave a whole nation a new and different appearance. Sometimes all the wise counsels, the cool deliberations, the well-concerted plans, that constitute the prosperity of a nation, proceed from the prudence of one single head. This one head represses the venality of one and the animosity of another, the ambition of this man and the avarice of that. Into this head one single vapour ascends; prosperity relaxes it; death strikes it off. Instantly a new world arises, and then that which was is no more, for with that head well-concerted measures, cool deliberations, and wise counsels all vanished away. Sometimes the rare qualities of one single general animate a whole army, and assign to each member of it his proper work—to the prudent a station which requires prudence, to the intrepid a station which requires courage, and even to an idiot a place where folly and absurdity have their use. From these rare qualities a state derives the glory of rapid marches, bold sieges, desperate attacks, complete victories, and shouts of triumph. This general finishes his life by his own folly, or is supplanted by a party cabal, or sinks into inaction on the soft down of his own panegyrics; or a fatal bullet, shot at random and without design, penetrates the heart of this noble and generous man. Instantly a new world appears, and that which was is no more; for with this general victory and songs of triumph expired. Sometimes the ability and virtue of one single favourite enable him to direct the genius of a prince, to dissipate the enchantments of adulation, to become an antidote against the poison of flattery, to teach him to distinguish sober applause from self-interested encomiums, and to render him accessible to the complaints of widows and orphans. This favourite sinks into disfavour, and an artful rival steps into his place. Rehoboam neglected the advice of prudent old counsellors, and followed the suggestions of inconsiderate youth. Any one of these changes produces a thousand consequences.

(2.) It would be easy to repeat of individuals what we have affirmed of public bodies: that is, that the world is a theatre in perpetual motion, and always varying, that every day, and in a manner every moment, exhibits some new scene, some change of decoration. It is then clear that the proposition in the text ought to be restrained to the nature of the subject spoken of.

2. But these indeterminate words—*That which hath been shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun*—must be explained by the place they occupy. Our chief guide to determine the meaning of some vain propositions of an author is to examine where he placed them, and what precise idea he had in his mind when he wrote them. By observing this rule we find that the same phrases are often taken in different senses. Without quoting other examples, we observe that the words under consideration occur twice in this book, once in the text and again in the fifteenth verse of the third chapter, where we are told, *That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been*. However, it is certain that these two sentences so much alike in sound have a very different meaning. The design of Solomon in the latter passage is to inform such persons as tremble at the least temptation that they were mistaken. We complain, say they, that God exercises our virtue more than he does that of other men, and, though he allows these rude attacks, yet he does not afford us strength sufficient to resist them. No, saith Solomon, whatever variety there may appear to be in the conduct of God towards men, yet there is always a certain uniformity that characterises his conduct. Indeed he giveth five talents to one, while he commits only one talent to another, and in this respect there is a variety: but he doth not require of him to whom he hath committed one talent an account of more than one talent, while he calls him to account for five talents to whom he committed five, and in this respect there is a perfect uniformity in his conduct; and so of the rest. *I know that whatsoever God doth (these are the words of Solomon)—I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and God doth it that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.*

But in our text the same words, *The thing that hath been is that which shall be*, have a different meaning. It is evident, by the place in which the wise man put them, that he intended to decry the good things of this life, to make the vanity of them appear, and to convince mankind that no revolutions can change the character of vanity essential to their condition. The connexion of the words establishes their meaning. From what events do mankind expect, saith he, to procure to themselves a firm and solid happiness in this life?

What efforts can be hereafter made greater than what have been made? Yet *what profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the world continueth the same, the sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth towards the south, and turneth about unto the north, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All rivers run into the sea, and whence they come thither they return again,* ver. 3—7. The moral world exactly resembles the world of nature. It is in vain to expect any vicissitude that will render the remaining part of life more happy than the former. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing,* ver. 8, or, as it may be translated, *with considering; nor the ear filled with hearing,* or, as the words may be rendered, *the ear never ceases to listen.* But this contention, which makes us stretch all our faculties in search of something to fill the void that all past and present enjoyments have left in our hearts—this doth not change the nature of things; all will be *vanity* in future, as all have been *vanity* in former times. *The thing which hath been is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which hath been done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

Manton, in his sermon on 2 Thess. i. 11, distinguishes faith from assurance, and points out the evil consequences of confounding them. He observes,

There is a usual mistake of faith among Christians, as if it were only a strong and blind confidence, which admits no doubt in the soul concerning their own salvation; but this is a vain conceit, which both hardens the impenitent and discourages the serious.

It hardens the impenitent. This strong confidence of their own good state may happen to be the greatest unbelief in the world; for in many it is a believing that to be true the flat contrary of which God has revealed in his word. 1 Cor. vi. 9, "Be not deceived; know you not that the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" They flatter themselves with the belief of the contrary; and if they can but bless themselves in their own hearts, and get the victory over their consciences and fears of wrath, and cry, Peace, peace, loudly enough, they think all is well, and so embrace an imagination and dream of their own for true faith. This confidence is absolutely inconsistent with the doctrine of salvation by Christ.

It likewise *discourages the serious*, who foolishly vex their own souls, and disquiet themselves in vain, thinking they have no faith because they have not such a peace as excludes all doubts and fears about their eternal state; whereas faith is a receiving God's testimony concerning his Son, or such an embracing of the doctrine of salvation by Christ as leads us to set ourselves about the duties required, that we may be capable of the blessings offered, even reconciliation with God and the everlasting fruition of him in glory. This mistake of the nature of faith leads Christians to most of their perplexities. Do you receive the word as the word of God? Then thankfully accept Christ as the offered remedy, and take his prescribed way to come to God; depend on his mercy, and continue in obedience to his precepts, and you will soon find that he is the "author of eternal salvation to all those that obey him." Heb. v. 9.

He then proceeds to explain what is meant by the work of faith, and in doing this he introduces a distinction between the internal and the external acts of faith. The following is the substance of this part of his sermon:—

The work of faith, in general, is all that work and business which belongs to faith.

More particularly let me tell you that there are two sorts of acts ascribed to faith, elicit and imperate, internal and external.

I. The internal acts of faith are,

1. Assent to the truth of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which has a just title to our firmest belief and choicest respect. 1 Tim. i. 15.

2. Consent, either to accept Christ for our Redeemer and Saviour (John i. 12) or to receive the word, as it is stated, in the form of a covenant. Acts ii. 41: "They received the word gladly," resolving to live by the rule, and earnestly to seek the happiness of that covenant which God has made with the world in Christ.

3. Dependence, or leaving the weight of our souls and all our eternal interests on this foundation-stone which God hath laid in Zion, or depending on his promises and looking for the performance of them.

II. The external acts include,

1. A bold and open confession of Christ, and owning his ways, notwithstanding the sharpest persecutions. This is the work of faith as put into the covenant, Rom. x. 9. There-

the duty of a Christian is made to consist of two parts; one concerns the heart, the other the mouth. There is believing with the heart, which is the internal principle; and there is open confession or profession, with the mouth, in spite of all persecution and danger: for all Christians are saved either as martyrs or as confessors, and therefore Christianity is called a profession, Heb. iii. 1. And, because this exposes to danger, we must venture all to make this profession; and this is the reason why the kingdom of God is compared to a wise merchant, that sold all for the pearl of great price, Matt. xiii. 45, 46. It is the work of faith; therefore it is said (Heb. iii. 6), "Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firmly to the end;" the words are, *παρρησίαν και τὸ καύχημα της ἐλπίδος*, that is, if we undauntedly continue our Christian profession and cheerfulness in all that befalls us for Christ's sake, knowing that we can be no losers by Christ. Heb. x. 23: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that has promised." Here, faith produces its work, when we are fortified against the terrors of the world, and the dangers feared do not make us waver in the ways of Christ or the profession of his name. And this is that work of faith which is accomplished with power, meaning the divine power, as Col. i. 11. It is the grace and power of God that bears us up under the afflictions we meet with in our Christian course. So 2 Tim. i. 8: "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, by the power of God." And here, "The Lord fulfil in you the work of faith with power," that is, complete in you all the good fruits of faith and patience, or enable you to bear whatever you suffer for embracing the truths of the gospel.

2. Ready obedience to the will of God, forsaking all sin, and walking in all newness of life to his praise and glory. Then is our practice conformable to our faith. And faith is said to work by love (Gal. v. 6), that is, to produce holiness and obedience, when the drift and bent of our lives is for God and heaven, to please, glorify, and enjoy him. What we are to believe and to do is the sum of religion; and the one is inferred out of the other: doing arises out of believing, as the branch does out of the root, 2 Pet. i. 5. And therefore our obedience is called the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 26), because it is animated and inspired by it.

Well, then, that which the apostle intends here is not the internal but the exterior acts of faith. For the drift of his prayer is that God would enable them to ride out the storm of those troubles which came upon them for the gospel's sake. And a Christian, in judging his condition, will better discern it in the external acts than the internal. For the upright cannot always discern the interior acts, or the strength of them; but the exterior are more sensibly and visibly brought forth in the view of conscience. God sees what is in our hearts, but we see it not till the effects manifest it. The sap is not seen when the apples and fruit do visibly appear. Like as we judge of the soundness of men's repentance by the fruits thereof, otherwise men may be deceived and think there is a change of mind when there is not (when John suspected the Pharisees, Matt. iii. 8, he said, Bring forth fruit meet for repentance; yea, the apostle exhorted men of better temper than they to repent, and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance, Acts xxvi. 20); so we judge of men's fear of God, not by the internal act of reverence, but by a departing from evil (Prov. viii. 13), of their love by their obedience (John xiv. 21, and 1 John v. 3), and of their faith by their holy and heavenly walking. There is no faith in those that live an unsanctified life; but where men set their face heavenward, make it their business to please God, here is true faith; they have received God's testimony, and therefore upon the encouragement of his promises continue with patience in well doing.

Besides, hypocrites will pretend a strong faith, and be ready to charge with injustice and injury those who shall question their belief of the doctrine of salvation by Christ; but they deny in their practice what they assert in their words. Every considerate man may collect from their actions that they have no true sense of the being of God; for they are not watchful over their own ways, and their actions are so absolutely contrary to God's laws, threats, and promises, yea, to all that is known of God, that certainly they do not believe there is a God, or are not in earnest when they think and speak so. It may be their mouths are not let loose to such boldness as openly to deny or question God's being; but their dealings are so false and detestable that a man may certainly conclude they never expect to be accountable to God for what they do. So for the belief in Christianity, many seem to believe as Christians, but live as infidels; nominally they are Christians, but really they deny the faith, and therefore the surest mark will be holy conversation and godliness.

Simeon largely exemplifies this Topic in a skeleton on John iv. 41, 42: "And many more believed because of his own word," &c. He observes, in

his introduction, that many of the Samaritans entertained high thoughts of our Lord's character from the testimony of the woman whom he met at Jacob's well; but afterwards, from personal acquaintance with him, they were convinced that he was the Saviour of the world. He then takes occasion to,

I. Distinguish between the kinds of faith here mentioned.

The faith which the Samaritans first exercised was founded on merely human report. The woman had testified to them that Jesus had told her all the secrets of her heart, even such as could be known only to the most high God, and had appealed to them whether this was not a convincing evidence that he was the long-expected Messiah. Her argument was plain and conclusive; and, as she had no motive for deceiving them, they believed her report of him, and acknowledged the justness of her conclusion. We do not mean to disparage this kind of faith: it was good as far as it went, and it was productive of solid benefit to the persons who possessed it, inasmuch as it removed all their prejudices and disposed them to form a more accurate judgment for themselves. But still we cannot regard this faith in any other light than as a speculative assent, grounded upon human testimony. It seems to have been not unlike that which is so common among ourselves, which arises from a view of the evidences of our religion. We see that all the ancient types and prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, and that most unquestionable miracles were wrought by him and his apostles in confirmation of his word; and therefore we say that he is and must be the Messiah. Yet those who are most versed in this kind of reasoning are not always suitably affected with it: their knowledge of Christianity is, in many cases, merely speculative, residing in their heads, but never descending into their hearts nor influencing their lives. We cannot therefore consider this as a saving faith. Being unproductive of good works, it is dead; and, if carried no further, it will leave the possessor of it in the state of those unhappy spirits of whom it is said, "they believe and tremble."

The faith to which they afterwards attained was founded on their own experience. During the two days that our blessed Lord stayed among them they heard him discourse on the things relating to his kingdom. They perceived that he spake as never man did; and "his word was with power." As it had before proved the heart of the woman at the well, so it searched their hearts, and disclosed to them all their hidden abominations. It showed them that they themselves were lost, yea, that the whole world also was in a perishing condition, and that he was sent of God on purpose to deliver them. From the correspondence which they saw between the character he sustained and the necessities they felt, they were assured "that he was the Christ, the Saviour of the world;" and they determined to rely on him as their Saviour and their Redeemer. Now this was saving faith: it brought them fully to Christ for the ends for which he was sent into the world. "With their hearts they believed on him unto righteousness, and with their mouths they made confession unto salvation." This faith was very different from that which they first exercised: it was more *distinct*, more *assured*, more *influential*. They had more full and complete views of the objects of Christ's mission, they "had within themselves a witness" of the suitableness and sufficiency of his salvation, and they instantly became his open and avowed disciples, in spite of all their former prejudices and the prejudices of all around them.

II. Notice the importance of making this distinction. Two facts will serve to illustrate this:—

1. For want of distinguishing *aright* many sincere persons are distressed. The nature of saving faith has, as might well be expected, been a subject of controversy in the Christian world. A full assurance of our own personal acceptance with God has been supposed by many to be an essential part of true faith; and hence multitudes who have really "fled to Christ for refuge, as to the hope set before them," are disquieted from day to day because they do not feel in themselves that assurance. But God does not require us to believe more than he himself has revealed; and where has he revealed that any particular individual amongst us is in a state of salvation? or where has he said that the belief of our own personal interest in Christ is necessary in order to our obtaining an interest in him? Indeed such a declaration would be absurd. As for straining metaphorical expressions, in order to found doctrines upon them; it is injudicious in the extreme. It is far better to examine what that faith was which was exercised by the saints of old, and, if we do that, we shall always find that the faith by which they were saved was a faith of *affiance*, and not that which is generally [but improperly] called a faith of *assurance*.

2. For want of distinguishing *at all* many insincere persons are ruined. The generality of persons seem to have no idea of any faith beyond that of a mere assent to certain pro-

positions; and, if they have never set themselves to oppose Christianity, they take for granted that they are believers. They were born in a Christian land, and have been educated in the Christian faith, and therefore they suppose that all is well. If they are licentious in their conduct, they will allow perhaps that they are deficient in their morals; yet they never suspect that they are materially wrong in their faith. Is it not important, then, that they should be told that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh?" Surely, whatever such persons may imagine, if ever they be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, they will say, Now we believe in Christ, not because we have been told by our parents that Christianity is true, but because we have heard him ourselves speaking to us in his word, and have felt that he is exactly such a Saviour as our necessities require.

DEFINE.—In order to impart our ideas to others with clearness and force we must not only distinguish them from other ideas with which they may have been confounded, but we must proceed to define what is thus distinguished. The neglect of this has given rise to much misapprehension and much angry debate. A large portion of the controversies which have agitated the church would have been avoided, and others long since satisfactorily adjusted, had it not been for the strange difficulty (for a strange one it certainly is) that men find in understanding each other's meaning. Hence the never-ending game of cross purposes, in which all of us at times are so much engaged. A leading cause of this will be found in a negligent use of language.* The philosopher, it is true, whether metaphysical, moral, or Christian, must generalize his ideas to compass the views of his enquiring mind, but, in conveying the fruits of his study and reflection to others, he must condescend to weigh *words*, and endeavour by a simplicity of definition to preclude the possibility of misapprehension on the part of those whom he instructs. This, of course, requires great care and attention; for, in order to arrive at just and adequate definitions, we must take an exact view of the idea to be described, trace it to its original principles, and mark the several simple perceptions that enter into its composition; we must also consider the particular manner in which these elementary ideas are combined, in order to form that precise conception for which the term we make use of stands. Every definition should not only contain a distinct enumeration of all the original ideas out of which the complex one is formed, but the order and manner of combining them into one conception must also be clearly exhibited. Where a definition has these requisites, and is at the same time distinguished by brevity and simplicity, nothing is wanting to its perfection, because every one who hears or reads it and understands the terms, seeing at once what ideas he is to join together, and also in what manner, can at pleasure form in his own mind the complex conception answering to the term defined. The true and proper end of definition is to present to the hearer just and accurate copies of our ideas; and in defining any thing we ought by no means to satisfy ourselves with the descriptions derived from any received system of morals or theology, but to think for ourselves, and transcribe the appearance which any subject makes to our minds.

With respect to definition, Claude merely observes, "This is sometimes used when an act of God is spoken of, as the pardon of our sins, the justification of our persons, &c., or when a virtue or a vice is in question, for then it may not be improper to define."

I may be permitted to add Dr. Watts's rule for a just definition. "1. It must be universal or adequate. 2. It must be proper and peculiar to the thing defined, and agree to that alone. 3. It must be clear and plain. 4. It

* See p. 190.

must be short, and have no superfluous words. 5. Neither the thing defined, nor a mere synonymous name, should make any part of the definition."

A beautiful example of definition is given in 1 Cor. xiii. The definition there proceeds entirely upon an examination of those excellent *qualities* which are comprised in genuine charity. Every one of the qualities mentioned is (at least in the original) clearly distinguished from the rest, and all combine to render the definition complete; from all the dictionaries in the world, and all the labour of a philosopher or a whole college of philosophers, a better specimen could not be formed. We may also mention here the apostle James's definition of heavenly wisdom: "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." As to learned definitions, they must never be made beyond the walls of a college or an academy. Robinson has very justly satirized them in his notes on Claude.

DIVIDE.—Having distinguished one thing from another thing, or from several species, and having presented a just definition, we proceed to divide. The trial is over, and nothing remains but to establish your propositions, to divide them into their respective parts, to pronounce sentence upon them. All that Claude has furnished on this subject is the following: "To divide regards either different species of the genus or different parts of the whole, and it may sometimes be used profitably. Thus, in speaking of God's providence in general, you may consider the extent of that providence, to which are subject, 1. Natural causes; 2. Contingent; 3. Independent; 4. Good and bad; 5. Small and great."

I do not know that I can give a better example than that which is already given in Bishop Sanderson's discourse in this volume, p. 360. You will perceive that this penetrating author distinguishes and defines the devices of man and Jehovah's counsels, and then divides the several considerations into a mode of discussion; if there be any defect here, as an example, it is in the definitions being too much mixed with the divisions, but this defect need not prevent the student from perceiving the distinctive use of the different portions of this Topic.

TOPIC XXVII.

COMPARE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER.

"THIS" says Claude, "is a very useful Topic, and it will often furnish very beautiful considerations, if we know how to make a proper use of it. For example, In this text of St. Paul to the Romans, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' you may make a very edifying comparison between this last part, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' and the first part, 'There is no condemnation;' you may remark that, in the one, the apostle expresses what God does in favour of the faithful, and in the other what the faithful do for the glory of God. God absolves them; and they live holily, and devote themselves to good works. God imposes holiness upon us in justification; and justification is the parent of holiness.

Take away justification, and there cannot possibly be any good works; take away good works, and there is no more justification.

"You may also compare this last part with the condition in which the believer is here considered, as being *in Christ Jesus*, and remark that these two things perfectly agree together, because Jesus Christ is the true cause of our justification, and sanctification is the principal effect of our communion with Jesus Christ.

"So, again, in this beautiful passage in the second of Ephesians—'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved'—you may oppose and compare these two subjects in the text, *dead in sin* and *rich in mercy*, as being two extremes—extreme misery and extreme mercy, one in us and the other in God. The greatness of our crimes manifests the riches of God's mercy, and the riches of his mercy absorb the greatness of our crimes. Had our sins been less, it must indeed have been mercy to pardon our sins, but not *riches* of mercy. If God had been only lightly inclined to mercy he might indeed have pardoned smaller sins, but his forgiveness would never have been extended to persons *dead* in their sins; this belongs only to extraordinary and abounding mercy."

It may be added that this method of elucidation may be extended to the comparison of one part of a history with another part of the same history, and the utility of this is shown by Robinson in his notes on Claude in the following among other less appropriate examples:—

John xvi. 13: "When the Spirit of truth shall come he will guide you into *all* truth." What! will the Holy Spirit answer all the questions that we may think proper to ask? Will he, for instance, acquaint us with the mode of divine existence? Compare the foregoing words with the following: "He shall not speak concerning himself;" he shall not acquaint you with the mode of his own existence, &c. "Whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak;" he shall fix your attention on the truths of revelation; he shall affect your hearts with my doctrines, &c.

In the examination of an opponent's arguments a hint may likewise be derived from this Topic; for, as we compare one part of a text with another part of the same text, so we may compare one part of an essay or discourse with another part of the same work, and where there is error we shall commonly be able to find inconsistency, on which to found an *argumentum ad hominem*, which, if it be seldom found to produce conviction, will at least tend to silence an opponent.

I am not aware of any good example of sermonizing in which this Topic occupies a prominent place; but the following, bearing in some degree upon it and probably suggested by it, may not be unacceptable. It is from Simeon on Ruth i. 15—17: "She (Naomi) said, Behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee," &c.

The partings of friends and relatives are common; and, inasmuch as they give birth to a great variety of emotions in the mind, they elicit the inward character with great fidelity. Such is the incident which we are now about to consider, and which will reflect peculiar light on the dispositions of one who though a Moabitess by birth, was one of the progenitors of our blessed Lord.

From this farewell scene, and the distinguished excellence of Ruth's behaviour we are led to mark her character,

I. Simply as here depicted. In the circumstances before us she approves herself a pattern,

1. Of filial piety. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, had long endeared herself to her, and now was about to part with her and to return to the land of Israel. Ruth would not

suffer her to depart alone, but determined to adhere to her to the latest hour of her life. Nothing could shake her resolution : she determined to renounce all her old relatives, and the prospects she might have in her native land, and to cleave steadfastly to Naomi, even unto death ; and the manner in which she refused to acquiesce in her mother's proposal was tender and affectionate in the extreme : "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." This, in other words, was as if she had said, "You know that any request of thine, however difficult or self-denying it were, would be obeyed with the utmost alacrity ; but to ask me to forsake thee, this is too much ; it would break my heart, I could not do it. I pray you to forbear putting me to so severe a trial. 'Entreat me not to leave thee ;' for the alternative of parting with thee or disobeying thy command is as a sword in my bones, a wound which I cannot possibly endure."

2. Of vital godliness. This was at the root, and was the true spring of her determined resolution : "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." She had been instructed by her mother in the knowledge of the true God ; and she determined to consecrate herself to his service and to take her portion with his people. This was very particularly noticed by Boaz, as no less conspicuous than her filial piety, c. ii. 11. 12. She acted in conformity with the injunction that was afterwards given by our Lord, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

II. As compared with that of Orpah and Naomi.

1. Compare it with that of Orpah. Orpah loved her mother-in-law ; and at first, determined not to separate from her. In answer to the suggestions of Naomi, she joined with Ruth in saying, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But, when a faithful representation was given her respecting the sacrifices she would be called to make, she repented of her good intentions, and taking an affectionate leave of her mother-in-law, "returned to her own people and to her idol-gods." Like the rich youth in the gospel, she departed, reluctantly indeed, yet finally and for ever. "Orpah," it is said, "kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her."

2. Compare it, also, with that of Naomi. That Naomi was a pious character we have no doubt ; and amiable too, for by her conduct she conciliated the regard of both her daughters-in-law, who, though Moabitesses by birth, were through her convinced of the superior excellence of the Jewish religion and the superior happiness of those who were imbued with it ; and we cannot but earnestly call the attention of Christian parents to this trait of Naomi's character, for there are too many who, whilst they profess godliness, make it odious to all who come in contact with them, and especially to those who are dependent on them. Their tempers are so hasty, so imperious, so ungoverned, that their very daughters are glad of an occasion to get from under their roof. I must tell all such professors that they are a disgrace to their profession, and that, if religion does not make us lovely and amiable in all our family relations, it does nothing for us, but deceives us to our ruin. Yet I cannot think very highly of Naomi's character when I see the advice she gave to her daughters. She loved them, it is true ; but her love was of too carnal a nature, for she had more respect to their temporal welfare than to the welfare of their souls. Some would offer an apology for her, by saying that she only intended to try the sincerity of their love. But, supposing she had done this in the first instance, which however, she had no right to do, especially when they had both said, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people," yet when she saw unhappily, that she had prevailed with Orpah, had she any right to urge Ruth to follow her sad example ? Should she not rather have rent her garments, yea, and torn the very hair from her head with anguish, at the thought of having so fatally prevailed to ruin her daughter's soul ? Should she not rather have striven to undo what she had done to Orpah than have continued to exert the same fatal influence with Ruth ? Should not the advice of Moses to Hobab have been hers to both of them, "Come with me, and God will do you good ?" Naomi, thou hast given us a picture too often realized in the present day : in thee we see a mother more anxious about the providing of husbands for their daughters than the saving of their souls. Thou didst love thy daughters, it is true ; but thy concern for their temporal welfare overpowered all other considerations, and not only kept thee from leading their minds to God, but actually induced thee to exert thy influence in opposition to their good desires : thou wast a tempter to them when thou shouldst have done all in thy power to keep them from temptation and have had thy whole soul bent on securing their everlasting salvation.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE EXORDIUM OR INTRODUCTION.

THE proper management of this part of a discourse is in my view highly important, for an appropriate and judicious commencement resembles a manly and graceful entry into a room, while a blunder here is not easily forgiven nor its effect easily counterbalanced. The rules laid down by Mons. Claude are comprehensive and judicious, and I cannot do better than transcribe the substance of them. He observes that "the principal use of an exordium is to prepare the hearer's mind for the particular matter you have to discuss and insensibly to conduct him to it. You *prepare* the hearer for the matter when you stir up in him such dispositions as he ought to have to hear well and to profit much. You insensibly *conduct* your hearer to the matter when, by the natural connexion of the subjects of which you speak, you lead him from one thing to another, and enable him to enter into the doctrine of your sermon.

"The *preparation* must be determined by the subject of which you are going to speak. If it be a sad and afflicting subject, in which you aim to excite the compassion, the grief, and the tears of your audience, you must commence accordingly. If you have to treat of a profound and difficult mystery, aim to diffuse elevation and admiration among your hearers. If some terrible example of God's justice be the subject, endeavour to stir up fear. If some enormous crime, prepare the mind for horror by a meditation on the enormity of human corruption. If you have to treat of repentance, and in an extraordinary manner to interest your hearers in it, you must begin to dispose them to it by general ideas of God's wrath which we have deserved, of the little fruit we have borne to his glory, or something of a like nature. If, on the contrary, the matter you have to treat of be common and tranquil, aim in your exordium to place the mind in its natural state, and only endeavour to excite honest and Christian tempers, which we all ought always to have. In a word, the exordium must always participate in the spirit of the subject that you mean to discuss, in order to dispose your hearers for it. Not to speak in this manner is to lose all the benefit of an exordium; and to use it to an opposite purpose would be to renounce common sense, and to act like an idiot.

"The second use of an introduction is to *conduct* the hearer gradually to the subject of which you are about to treat. This (as I have said) depends on the connexion between the subjects of the exordium with each other and with the matter of the discussion. I say first with *each other*; they must as it were, hold each other by the hand, and have a mutual dependence and subordination, otherwise the auditor will be surprised to find himself suddenly transported from one topic to another. I say also with the *discussion*; for the exordium is principally intended to introduce that.

"1. The first quality of an exordium is brevity. This, however, has a proper measure; for, as an exordium ought not to be excessively long, so neither should it be too short; the middle way is the best. The longest exordium may have ten or twelve periods, and the shortest six or seven, provided the periods be not too long. The reason, is, that, on the one hand, proper time may be given the hearer to prepare himself to hear you with

attention and to follow you in the discussion of the matter; and, on the other, that in giving time sufficient for that you may prevent his wandering out of the subject, wearying himself, and becoming impatient. If the exordium be too short, it will oblige the hearer to enter too soon into the matter without preparation enough; and excessive length would weary him, for it is with an auditor as with a man who visits a palace, he does not like to stay too long in the court or first avenues; he would only view them transiently without stopping, and proceed as soon as possible to gratify his principal curiosity.

"2. An exordium must be clear, and consequently disengaged from all sorts of abstruse and metaphysical thoughts. It should be expressed in natural and popular terms, and not overcharged with matter. You must avoid all that can give pain to the mind, such as physical questions, long trains of reasoning, and such like. However, do not imagine that, under any pretence of great clearness, an exordium must have only theological matter, or consist rather of words than things. This would be falling into the other extreme. An exordium must contain matter capable of nourishing and satisfying the mind, to do which it must be clear, easy to comprehend, and expressed in a very natural manner.

"3. An exordium must in general be cool and grave.* Consequently no grand figures may be admitted, as apostrophes, violent exclamations, reiterated interrogations, nor, in a word, anything that tends to give vehement emotions to the hearers; for, as the discourse must be accommodated to the state of the hearer, he in the beginning being cool and free from agitations, the speaker ought to be so too. No wise man will approve exordiums full of poetical raptures, of impetuous or angry emotions, of bold interrogations, or surprising paradoxes. You must, in the beginning, speak gently, remembering that your auditors are not yet in heaven, nor in the air, nor at all elevated in their way thither, but upon earth, and in a place of worship.

"4. An exordium, however, ought not to be so cool and grave as not to be at the same time engaging and agreeable. There are three principal ends which a preacher should propose, namely, to instruct, to please, and to affect;† but, of these three, that which should reign in an exordium is to please. You should indeed also aim to instruct and affect, but less to instruct than to please, and less still to affect than to instruct. If you can judiciously and properly introduce any thing tender into an exordium (especially on extraordinary occasions) you may do so to good purpose; but, be that as it may, the agreeable should reign in this part. You must carefully exclude from the exordium all ill-natured censures, terrible threatenings, bitter reproaches, and, in general, all that savours of anger, contempt, hatred, or indifference, and, in short, everything that has the air of quarrelling with the hearers. Their attention must not only be excited (you may sufficiently do so by censures and reproaches), but you must softly insinuate yourself into their esteem, so that they may not only not oppose

* This is a rule which may sometimes be dispensed with. Cicero begins an oration thus: "*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? Quamdiu etiam furor iste tuus nos illudet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia?*" &c. Perhaps an exordium somewhat more animated than usual may be proper on such subjects as Jer. ix. 23, 24, and Eph. ii. 4—7.

† See Blair's Lectures.

what you say, but be well satisfied that you are an honest and well-meaning man.*

"5. The whole of the exordium must be naturally connected with all the matter of the text. I say, first, *the whole of the exordium*; for great care must be taken to put nothing there that is foreign to your subject. The best exordiums are those which are composed of two propositions the former of which is naturally and immediately connected with the latter, and the latter naturally and immediately connected with the text. Each of these propositions may be either approved or amplified; but the latter must always conduct you with ease to the subject in question, nor must the former be very distant. According to this maxim, all exordiums must be condemned which, instead of leading you into the text, make you as it were, tumble from a precipice into it, which is intolerable. Those also are to be condemned which conduct to the text by many long circuits, that is, by many propositions chained together, which is certainly vicious, and can only fatigue the hearer. I add, in the second place, the exordium must be connected with *the whole matter of the text*. It ought not merely to relate to one of its parts (or to one view only, if you intend to consider it in different views), but to all. One of the principal uses of an exordium is to prepare the mind of the hearer for the matter to be discussed. If, therefore, the exordium refer only to one of its parts, or to one view only, it will prepare the mind of the hearer for that one part, for that one view only, and not for the rest.

"6. An exordium must be simple. We would not entirely banish figures; on the contrary, we would always employ such as may render the discourse pleasant and agreeable; but pompous and magnificent expressions must be avoided, as far as the things spoken will permit. Do not use a style too elevated, bordering on bombast, nor periods too harmonious, nor overstrained allegories, nor even metaphors too common or too bold; for indeed the hearer's mind, yet cool and in its natural state, can bear nothing of this kind.

"7. An exordium must not be common. As this is a rule much abused, it will be needful to explain it. By a common exordium I mean, in the first place, one taken from trivial things, and which have been said over and over again: these the people already know, and your labour will be infallibly thrown away. Such are exordiums taken from comparisons of the sun, of kings, of conquerors, of the ancient Romans, &c., or from some histories of the Old Testament which have been often repeated, or from some well-known types, as the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea, &c. In the second place, I mean by a common or general exordium, one which may be alike applied to two texts of different matter, or to two contrary interpretations of the same text. It is in this sense that common exordiums are vicious and distasteful.

"8. Even in metaphorical or figurative texts it is quite puerile to make an exordium join the text by a metaphor; for, whatever ingenuity there

* Quintilian insists on his orator's being a *good man*. The whole first chapter of his twelfth book is spent in proving the necessity of this: and, if this be so needful at the bar, how much more so is it in the pulpit! His conclusion is enough to make a Christian minister blush: "*Mutos enim nasci, et egere omni ratione satius fuisset, quam Providentiæ munera in mutuam perniciem convertere*"—*Men had better be born dumb, and even destitute of reason, than pervert those gifts of Providence to pernicious purposes.*

may seem to be in it, it is certain there is no taste, no judgment, discovered in the practice; and, however it may pass in college declamations, it would appear too trifling in the pulpit. The exordium, then, must be connected with the text by the matter itself, that is, not by the figure, but by the *subject* intended to be conveyed by the figure. It would not, however, forbid the joining the exordium to the text sometimes by the figure, provided it be done in a chaste and prudent manner.

“Let us give one example. ‘He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life,’ John vi. 54. An exordium to a sermon from this text may be taken from the idea which holy scripture teaches us to form of our conversion, as if it were a *new birth*, which begins a new life. You may observe that, for this purpose, it speaks of a new man, a new heaven which illuminates, and a new earth which supports, him,—that, attributing to this new man the same senses which nature has formed in us, as sight, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, it attributes also to him objects proportioned to each of these mystical senses like those which our senses produce by their natural operations. It us tells that our eyes contemplate the celestial light, which illuminates and guides us in the ways of righteousness, and that our ears hear the voice of God, who calls us, and who, by these means, makes us obey our vocation. It tells us that the gospel is a savour of life, which communicates salvation to us. And, finally, it attributes to us a mouth, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, in order to nourish us to life eternal. It is this last expression which Jesus Christ has made use of in the text, ‘He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.’

“This exordium joins itself to the text by the figure made use of in the text, but in such a manner as not to be chargeable with affectation or witticism; for it is by a serious reflection on the *scripture use* of the figure, acknowledging it to be a figure, and *preparing* the hearer to attend to the explication.

“To these rules I subjoin a word or two on the *vices* of exordiums.

“1. There are some preachers who imagine it a fine thing to take exordiums from the persons of their hearers, or the circumstances of times, places, general affairs, or news of the world; but I believe this is altogether a vicious method, and should never be used but on extraordinary occasions. First, there is too much affectation in it. Is it not a vain parade to begin a discourse with things which have no relation to the matter?—It is certainly contrary to the chastity and modesty of a Christian pulpit. Secondly, exordiums of this sort are usually pulled in by head and shoulders. How should it be otherwise, when the articles of which they are composed have, if any, only a very distant relation to the text? By such means you defeat the principal design of an exordium. And, finally, it is very difficult in such exordiums to avoid saying impertinences; for what, in a public discourse, can be more indelicate than to speak of yourself, or hearers, or times, or news? In my opinion, such exordiums ought to be entirely rejected.

“2. You must also, for the most part, reject exordiums taken from profane history, or what they call the apophthegms of illustrious men. This method savours too much of the college, and is by no means in the taste of pious well-bred men. Alexander, Cæsar, Pompey, all the great names in antiquity, have no business to ascend the pulpit; they are not suffered now-

a-days either in orations in the senate or in pleas of the bar, much less ought they be allowed in Christian sermons. It may not be amiss if they appear now and then in the discussion, or in the application : though even there we ought to see them but seldom. But to introduce them at the beginning of a sermon is intolerable. I say much the same of citations from profane authors ; they must be forborne, unless it be of something so particular, so agreeable, and so apt to the text, as to carry its own recommendation along with it. Of this kind, I think, was the exordium of a sermon on Ps. xc. 12 : ‘So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’ It was taken from Plutarch, who relates that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the Republic, to which he immediately replied, ‘Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all.’ It was added that this is the notion of almost all wicked men, who being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to the Master of all creatures,—that if only one man, or two men, were in question, the attempt of Alcibiades might succeed, but, as it was God with whom they had to do, it must be worse than foolish to imagine his tribunal could be avoided,—that there was no other way to take than to prepare to give account to God, nor any advice more reasonable than to labour continually to do it well,—and that, for this purpose, even self-interest should oblige us to have recourse to God to assist us by his grace. This is what the church aims to teach us in the words of the prophet, ‘So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’

“In general, the best exordiums are taken from *theology* ; for as, on the one hand, they have always more relation to the matter of the text, so, on the other, they much better prepare the hearers’ minds, being more grave, and free from the puerile pedantries of the college.

“In order to compose an exordium—after you have well considered the senses of the text, and observed what are the principal matters which ought to enter into the discussion, and after you have the division, endeavour to reduce the whole to one common idea, and then choose some other idea naturally connected with that common idea, either immediately or by means of another. If it be immediately connected with the subject, endeavour to reduce it to one proposition, which may be cleared and proved as you go on ; or, if it have parts which require separate explications and proofs, it must be managed so as to include them ; and, finally, by the natural connexion of that proposition with the discussion, enter into the text. If the proposition be connected with the text only remotely, then establish the first, pass on to the second, and so proceed from the second to the text.

“Exordiums may be taken from almost all the same topics as observations, for there are but few good exordiums which might not go into the discussion under the title of general observations. Of such observations, that must be chosen for an exordium which is least essential, or least necessary to the discussion, and which, besides, is clear, agreeable, and entertaining. A *comparison* may sometimes be employed in an exordium, but not often :

nor must trivial comparisons be used which all the world know, or which are taken from any thing mean ; nor must they be embarrassing, taken from things unknown to the people, as those are which are borrowed from mechanics, astronomy, &c., of which the people know nothing at all.

"*Bible-history* may be used, but sparingly ; and the application must be always just, agreeable, and, in some sort, new and remarkable.

"*Types* may also be employed, but with the same precautions, always consulting good sense and taste.

"The best method is to compose several exordiums for the same text, by taking it in all its different relations ; for by such means you may choose the most proper. But after all these general precepts, which indeed ought to be known, and by which exordiums must be regulated, it is certain *the invention and composition of an exordium can become easy only by practice*. A young preacher ought not to complain of trouble, nor to be any way negligent in the matter ; for he may be sure of succeeding by attention and application."

Such is Claude's view of the subject. I may be permitted to add that exordiums are frequently so constructed as to appear mere excrescences, having little or no connexion with the following part of the sermon, and so far from forming any part of the subject discussed that they would serve equally well for many different *kinds* of texts or subjects. It will be useful to compare your exordium with the running title of the sermon ; and if, instead of recognizing each other, they appear perfect strangers, as is too often the case, you may be sure that you have entered upon a wrong track of thought, and must endeavour to rectify the error.

While, however, it is necessary that your exordium should agree with the text, participating in its very spirit as well as in the sentiment, and forming a constituent part of the subject, you must at the same time avoid anticipating what belongs to the discussion ; for in this case you would either be forced to employ repetition or weaken your argument. On this account it is generally advisable to form the sermon entirely before you think of an exordium ; then the whole matter lies before you ; you not only see the character and spirit of your subject, but also what remaining idea will lead to the whole. But there is an exception to this rule ; for if the preacher designs to form a narrative, historical, or contextual exordium, he may certainly form this in the first instance. Where a text supplies three or four divisions, the first of which is a character, &c., one means of preserving simplicity is to throw such first part altogether into the exordium.

The examples now to be produced will I trust furnish the best illustration of the foregoing rules. These examples may be arranged into four classes—the narrative, the explicatory, the argumentative, and the observational.

NARRATIVE EXORDIUMS.

I commence with those of the narrative kind, because they are the most simple, and, where they can be employed with propriety, are generally most interesting.

Jay's Sermon's, vol. ii., p. 252, on Ezek. xxix. 17—20.

Tyre was the great emporium of trade and navigation of that age. Tyre became rich, luxurious, proud, and impious. Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument in God's

hand to destroy, or at least to subdue, the people, no doubt in mercy, that in their affliction they might seek the Lord. These Tyreans made such a stout resistance that it was thirteen years before Nebuchadnezzar could make a breach in the walls, and, when entry was effected, the besiegers found an empty city; for the Tyreans, having had command of the sea, transported all their treasures to a neighbouring station. [These circumstances introduce the words of the text.] As Nebuchadnezzar had such a hard service for no advantage, God here in the text promises him a rich and easy conquest of Egypt.

The discourse which follows, an outline of which is given at p. 83, comprises several important observations, and this introduction is most appropriate to such design. No other kind of exordium could have suited the occasion so well, and herein lies the skill of the preacher. When the introduction suits the subject, and the subject the introduction, they give mutual aid and beauty to each other. I have one thing more to observe with regard to the above example. The sermon is not merely introduced by the narrative, but the narrative is introduced by a remark with some illustration,* both of which are appropriate. The remark is this: "When God designs a work, he has frequently condescended to intimate it to his chosen servants," Amos iii. 7. The author then instances the Lord's discoveries to Ezekiel respecting Tyre, and thus the connexion of thought is supported; and the same course is taken in the following example from Blair, on the power of conscience, Gen. xlii. 21, 22: "And they said one to another, We are guilty," &c. The sermon itself, like Jay's, is treated by way of observation. The following is the substance of its narrative introduction.

The *previous remark* is on the interesting simplicity of the patriarchal age.

The book of Genesis displays a more singular and interesting scene than was ever presented to the world by any other historical record. It carries us back to the beginning of time, and exhibits mankind in their infant and rising state. It shows us human manners in their primitive simplicity, before the arts of refinement had polished the behaviour or disguised the characters of men, when they gave vent to their passions without dissimulation and spoke their sentiments without reserve. Few great societies were, as yet, formed on the earth. Men lived in scattered tribes. The transactions of families made the chief materials of history; and they are related, in this book, with that beautiful simplicity which in the highest degree both delights the imagination and affects the heart.

This leads to the *narrative*.

Of all the patriarchal histories, that of Joseph and his brethren is the most remarkable for the characters of the actors, the instructive nature of the events, and the surprising revolutions of worldly fortune. As far as relates to the text, and is necessary for explaining it, the story is to the following purport:—Joseph, the youngest except one of the sons of Jacob, was distinguished by his father with such marks of peculiar affection as excited the envy of his brethren. Having related to them, in the openness of his heart certain dreams which portended his future advancement above them, their jealousy rose to such a height that they unnaturally conspired to accomplish his destruction. Seizing the opportunity of his being at a distance from home, they first threw him into a pit and afterwards sold him as a slave, imposing on their father by a false relation of his death. When they had thus gratified their resentment, they lost all remembrance of their crime. The family of Jacob was rich and powerful; and several years passed away during which they lived in prosperity, without being touched, as far as appears, with the least remorse for the cruel deed which they had committed. Meanwhile, Joseph was safely conducted by the hand of Providence through a variety of dangers, until, from the lowest condition, he rose at last to be chief favourite of the king of Egypt, the most powerful monarch at that time in the world. While he possessed this high dignity, a general famine distressed all the neighbouring countries. In Egypt alone, by means of his foresight and prudent adminis-

* Robinson seems to coin a new word for such remarks, and calls them *præexordia*.

tration, plenty still reigned. Compelled to have recourse to that kingdom for a supply of food, the brethren of Joseph, upon this occasion, appeared in his presence, and made their humble application to him for liberty to purchase corn, little suspecting the governor before whom they *bowed down their faces to the earth*, to be him whom long ago they had sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites. But Joseph no sooner saw than he knew his brethren; and at this unexpected meeting his heart melted within him. Fraternal tenderness arose in all its warmth, and totally effaced from his generous breast the impression of their former cruelty. Though, from that moment, he began to prepare for them a surprise of joy, yet he so far restrained himself as to assume an appearance of great severity. By this he intended both to oblige them to bring into Egypt his youngest and most beloved brother, whose presence he instantly required, and also to awaken within them a due sense of the crimes which they had formerly perpetrated. Accordingly his behaviour produced the designed effect. For while they were in this situation, strangers in a foreign land, where they had fallen, as they conceived, into extreme distress—where they were thrown into prison by the governor, and treated with rigour for which they could assign no cause, the reflection mentioned in the text arose in their minds. Conscience brought to remembrance their former sins. It recalled, in particular, their long-forgotten cruelty to Joseph; and, without hesitation, they interpreted their present distress to be a judgment, for this crime, inflicted by heaven. They said one to another, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore has this distress come upon us.—Behold, also, his blood is required.”

This exordium prepares the way for his observations, which are as follows:—

I. That a sense of right and wrong in conduct, or of moral good and evil, belongs to human nature.

II. That it produces an apprehension of merited punishment when we have committed evil.

III. That although this inward sentiment be stifled during the season of prosperity, yet in adversity it will revive.

IV. That when it revives it determines us to consider every distress which we suffer, from whatever cause soever it has arisen, as an actual infliction of punishment from God.

The same author, on 2 Kings viii. 12, 13: “And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do,” &c.

In the days of Joram, king of Israel, flourished the prophet Elisha. His character was eminent, and his fame so widely spread, that Benhadad, the king of Syria, though an idolator, sent to consult him concerning the issue of a distemper which threatened his life. The messenger employed on this occasional was Hazael, who appears to have been one of the princes, or chief men, of the Syrian court. Charged with rich gifts from the king, he presented himself before the prophet, and accosted him in terms of the highest respect. During the conference which they held together, Elisha fixed his eye steadfastly on the countenance of Hazael, and discerning, by a prophetic spirit, his future tyranny and cruelty, he could not contain himself from bursting into a flood of tears. When Hazael, in surprise, enquired into the cause of this sudden emotion, the prophet plainly informed him of the crimes and barbarities which he foresaw that hereafter he would commit. The soul of Hazael abhorred, at this time, the thought of cruelty. Uncorrupted, as yet, by ambition or greatness, his indignation arose at being thought capable of such savage actions as the prophet had mentioned; and with much warmth, he replied, “But, what! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?” Elisha made no reply but to point out a remarkable change which was to take place in his condition: “The Lord hath shown me that thou shalt be king over Syria.” In the course of time all that had been predicted came to pass. Hazael ascended the throne, and ambition took possession of his heart. “He smote the children of Israel in all their coasts. He oppressed them during all the days of king Jehoahaz” (2 Kings xiii. 32); and, from what is left on record of his actions, he plainly appears to have proved, what the prophet foresaw him to be, a man of violence, cruelty, and blood.

In this passage of history an object is presented which deserves our serious atten-

tion. We behold a man who, in one state of life, could not look upon certain crimes without surprise and horror, who knew so little of himself as to believe it impossible for him ever to be concerned in committing them; we see that same man, by a change of condition, transformed in all his sentiments, and, as he rose to greatness, rising also in guilt, till at last he completed that whole character of iniquity which he once detested. Hence the following observations naturally arise:—

I. That to a mind not entirely corrupted sentiments of abhorrence at guilt are natural.

II. That, notwithstanding those sentiments, the mind may be brought under the dominion of the vices which it most abhorred.

III. That this unhappy revolution is frequently owing to a change of men's external circumstances and condition in the world.

These exordiums I cannot but consider as excellent specimens of the power of description. The late Dr. Hunter, in his *Scripture Biography*, very ably adopts this style, and numerous train of followers have graced the march of Blair and Hunter; but I owe it to the scriptures to declare that in general the simple language of scripture is far more striking than that of these descriptionists: the story of Joseph and his brethren, in particular, is related by Moses in a manner which quite excels Dr. Blair; yet I wish young preachers to exercise themselves in such exordiums, only giving a hint to the people that they ought to read in the scriptures the account which they give in other language.

Beddome also furnishes an exordium of this class; but that part of the narrative which he recites appears brought forward only to mark the analogy between the journeyings of the Israelites and the spiritual experience of the Christian. His text is *Exod. xiii. 21*: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud," &c.

God, having brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, did not leave them to find the way to Canaan by their own wisdom, or encounter the various difficulties of the way in their own strength. He himself set out with them on their journey, and conducted them to the end of it. The first stage was to Rameses (on the other side of the Red Sea), which signifies *brokenness*, and may not unfitly represent the state of a sinner's heart in the commencement of his religious course. The second stage was Succoth, which may be rendered *tents*, denoting the unsettled state of God's people in the present world. They are strangers and sojourners, and acknowledge themselves to be so as soon as they turn their faces Zion-wards. Their next stage was to Etham, a word that signifies *prowess* or *strength*; so that the way to Etham is through Rameses and Succoth, not forgetting the passage of the Red Sea.

Hitherto the Israelites were the special care of Providence. The Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with them. How he continued to perform this kind and necessary office we are informed in the words of our text: "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night."

He then offers a few general remarks upon the text by way of explanation; and, secondly, considers the symbolical meaning of the fiery pillar in the wilderness, and its application to our present circumstances.

EXPOSITORY EXORDIUMS.

What I have denominated the expository exordium is very properly prefixed to propositional and other discourses which are not treated textually. Nothing is more necessary than to show the true meaning of a text before you attempt to establish either doctrines or observations upon it, because the justness of your reasonings or remarks may otherwise appear doubtful. Frequently, indeed, even when the greater part of the sermon is to be occupied *establishing* some truth, your exposition must occupy one division; but,

when this is not required, it must find a place in the exordium. The following examples will sufficiently show the propriety of this course:—

Beddome on Col. i. 27: "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Glory is the greatest word in our language; and "the God of glory" is one of the most magnificent titles given to the Supreme Being in the sacred scriptures. No word is so sweet, so full and comprehensive. *Glory* is the object of all true believers. *The hope of it* is wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, and they are begotten to it by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Whatever else they relinquish, they will not part with this; they live in hope, and die in hope. It is this which stimulates them to action, and supports them under their various afflictions.

Christ dwells in all true believers as a principle of spiritual life and action. The second Adam is a quickening spirit, giving life wherever his presence is enjoyed; and, as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without Christ is dead also. All our spiritual performances, and all our capacity for what is good, are from him; and, without a vital and intimate union with him, we can do nothing. "Know you not," says the apostle, "that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" John xv. 5; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. The union between Christ and believers is not indeed essential, like that which subsists between the sacred Three, though with that it is in some respects compared, John xvii. 21. Nor is it a personal union, like that between the divine and human nature of our Lord. Nor is it merely an operative or influential union, like that between God and all his creatures; "for in him we live and move and have our being." It is a mystical and spiritual union, a union of affection, interest, and design. It is also mutual and reciprocal: he dwells in us and we in him; he sups with us and we with him: and because he lives we shall live also, John xiv. 23; Gal. ii. 20: Rev. iii. 20.

A similar introduction is furnished by the same author on Acts xi. 23: "Who, when he had come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad," &c. The discourse is strictly observational, and a narrative introduction would have been very suitable, but in that case the necessary exposition must have supplied the materials for the first observation.

By "the grace of God" in scripture is generally meant his favour to the unworthy, in opposition to merit and desert. It supposes that God is under no constraint in exercising mercy, and that man has no claims upon him. It is the only source of all the great blessings we enjoy in this world and of all the blessings we shall enjoy in the next. This grace is displayed in our regeneration, sanctification, and preservation; and, when its subjects are completely glorified, grace will be fully satisfied. Faith is necessary to salvation, but does not lessen its freeness; for that also is matter of free favour, as Eph. ii. 8, 9.

The term grace is however sometimes put for the *effect* of God's free favour towards us, and is so to be understood in our text. Considering the favour of God as the original source of our salvation, it is grace in the fountain: in its operations it is grace in the stream: or say grace in the principle and in the product. In both respects it is absolutely free, without money and without price. It anticipates our deserts and endeavours, and far exceeds our highest hopes.

It is evident that where this grace is it will be *seen*, and that the appearance of it in others is matter of joy to Christians, and especially to faithful ministers.

Walker on 2 Cor. viii. 9: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

These words contain an accurate description of the grace or free favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, which all true believers are said to *know*, that is, they have not only heard the report of this grace, assented to the truth of the report, and are able to give some account of it to others, but they know it experimentally, have tasted its sweetness and felt its power on their own hearts.

The discussion of this sermon being expository, Mr. Walker very properly formed his introductory sentence (for it is but a single sentence) on that part of his text which required least explanation. The sermon is founded upon the several particulars mentioned in the text as exemplifying the greatness of the Redeemer's love or grace, as

- I. His state previously to his incarnation : " He was rich."
- II. The poverty to which he voluntarily submitted.
- III. The condition of those for whose sake he thus condescended.
- IV. The end which he contemplated : " That we might be rich."
- V. The connexion between the poverty of Christ and the riches of his people.

Blair on Ps. lxxvi. 10 : " Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain."

This psalm is generally supposed to have been written in the reign of Hezekiah, and to refer to the formidable invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, when the angel of the Lord, in one night, discomfited the whole Assyrian host, and smote them with sudden destruction. To this interposition of the divine arm the context may naturally be applied. In the text we have the wise and religious reflection of the psalmist upon the violent designs which had been carried on by the enemies of his country, and upon the issue to which Providence brought them : " Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." By " the wrath of man " we are to understand all that the impetuosity of human passion can devise or execute ; the projects of ambition and resentment, the rage of persecution, the fury of war, the disorders which violence produces in private life, and the public commotions which it excites in the world—all these shall praise God, not with their intention and design, nor by their native tendency, but by those wise and good purposes which his providence makes them accomplish, from their poison extracting health, and converting things which in themselves are pernicious into instruments of his glory and of public benefit, so that, though " the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," it is nevertheless compelled to minister to his praise. The psalmist adds, " The remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain ; " that is, God will allow scope to the wrath of man so far as it answers his good purposes and is subservient to his praise ; the rest of it shall be curbed and bound up. When it would attempt to go beyond its prescribed limit he says to it, as to the waters of the ocean, " Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

All this shall be fully verified and declared by the last issue of things, when we shall be able more clearly to trace the divine administration through its several steps, by seeing the consummation of the whole. In some cases it may be reserved for this period to unfold the mysterious wisdom of heaven. But, in general, as much of the divine conduct is at present manifest as gives us just ground for the assertion in the text. In the sequel of this discourse I shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm it. I shall show in what manner the wrath of man is made to praise the power, the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of God.

It may here be observed that the expository exordium is often rendered more interesting by commencing with an appropriate but brief remark, in a similar manner to that of the narrative kind. The following is a very beautiful example of exposition thus introduced by Simeon on Isaiah xiv. 32 : " What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation ? That the Lord hath founded Zion," &c.

Previous remark.

God is for the most part overlooked in the government of the world ; and hence arises an over-confidence among some and an undue timidity amongst others. But if we viewed God as ordering and overruling everything, even to the falling of a sparrow, we should undertake nothing ourselves without a direct reference to him, nor fear what was undertaken by others whilst we had him for our protector. This is the great lesson which we are taught in the text.

Then follows the exposition.

The context contains a prophecy respecting the fate of Palestine. The Philistines had been invaded and conquered by king Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6) ; but in the days of Ahaz, Uzziah's son, they had regained their cities and made reprisals on the provinces of the Jewish monarch, 2 Chron. xxviii. 18. At the accession of Hezekiah to the throne of Judah they hoped to make yet further inroads on the Jewish territory ; and the prophet Isaiah was inspired to foretel that they should not only fail in their attempts, but be utterly vanquished by him whom they so fondly thought to subdue and subjugate. Read the passage in this view, and the whole address will appear ex-

trremely spirited and beautiful. "Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken" (that is, because thou hast triumphed over Uzziah's son); "for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, or adder; and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." Uzziah bit thee only as a common serpent; but his grandson Hezekiah shall inflict a wound as fatal as that inflicted by an adder, and prove as irresistible as a fiery flying serpent. "And the firstborn of the poor [Jews, whom thou hast so oppressed] shall feed, and the needy [whom thou hast so terrified] shall lie down in safety; whilst thy root shall be destroyed by famine and thy remnant with the sword." Instead then of rejoicing, "Howl, O gate! cry, O city! thou whole Palestina art dissolved; for there shall come from the north [Judea] a smoke [and dust of an army in full march]; and none shall be alone [or decline serving in this army] at the appointed time." In the mean time "what shall one then answer the messengers of the nation,"* when they come, full of alarm and terror, announcing thy preparations to invade the land of Judah? Answer, "That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it," and that no weapon ever formed against them shall prosper.

The words, thus explained, we shall consider as proclaiming,

I. An unquestionable fact: "God has founded Zion."

II. An instructive lesson: It teaches us that our trust must be on God alone, and that confidence in him shall never be disappointed.

III. A consoling truth: "The poor of his people shall trust in it."

Beddome, in the introduction to his sermon on Ps. cxix. 129, "Thy testimonies are wonderful"—after a very suitable remark in the style of comment, explains and enlarges upon the word "testimonies."

Previous remark.

It is amazing with what energy and variety of expression David in this psalm sets forth his love to God's holy word; and it is in consequence of the closest inspection of its contents, and the most intimate acquaintance with its properties, that he declares it to be truly wonderful. Other writings may have their excellences, and be entitled to high regard; but no human production can compare with the records of eternal truth. These are dictated by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and written with the finger of the living God.

Exposition.

The word "testimony," in the singular, is generally put for the whole of the inspired writings, as in Ps. xix. 7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The scripture is a divine testimony, given by inspiration of God; and holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Tim. iii. 16. It is a testimony concerning God, his perfections and operations, the way in which he is to be worshipped, and the method of salvation which his infinite wisdom has devised. Though it is not silent on the mysteries of nature and of providence, yet its principal object is to make known the counsels of divine grace. It is a testimony from God to man; it teaches what could not otherwise have been known, and places in a much clearer light what might possibly have been discovered by other means.

The New Testament is especially called the testimony of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Tim. i. 8. In it the Father bears witness to Christ, and Christ bears witness of him. It is the record which God has given of his Son, and of that eternal life which he has given to us in him.

By "testimonies," in the plural number, we are commonly to understand the precepts of the moral law, Deut. iv. 45; vi. 17. Hence the ark in which the two tables of the law were deposited was called the ark of the testimony, Exod. xxx. 6. God, in giving the law to the children of Israel testified his peculiar favour towards them; and, in continuing his word amongst us, he still testifies his loving-kindness towards us. His holy law is an infallible rule to judge and walk by, an unerring standard to which all our sentiments and actions must be reduced; what it does not require cannot be a duty; what it forbids cannot but be a sin. It is called "a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark

* The general interpretation, of their being *foreign ambassadors sent to congratulate Hezekiah*, enervates the whole force of the passage, and is in opposition to the text itself, which speaks of them as the messengers of the nation, and not of foreign nations,

place," 2 Pet. i. 19. David also considered it as a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path, Ps. cxix. 105. It is to the believer like the pillar of cloud and fire which went before the Israelites in the wilderness, directing their marchings and encampments.

The following is from the same author, vol. vii., p. 14, on 2 Cor. xi. 2 :
 "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy."

Previous remark.

Pious and faithful ministers have much at heart the true interest of their people. Paul therefore, well knowing the state of the Corinthian church, expresses the most painful apprehensions on their account ; he is "jealous over them with godly jealousy."

Exposition.

The term "jealousy" is sometimes expressive of wrath and indignation, and in this sense it is ascribed to the Supreme Being. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth ; the Lord revengeth, and is furious ; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies, Exod. xx. 5 ; Nah. i. 2 ; 1 Cor. x. 22. The term is more frequently applied to those suspicions which arise out of the conjugal state, which, though they may have their origin in the extravagance of love, often produce the same effects as mortal hatred. Jealousy in this respect is cruel as the grave, Num. v. 14. 29 ; Cant. viii. 6.

In the passage under consideration the word is expressive of a tender and anxious concern for the welfare of others, attended with some doubtfulness concerning them, including a mixture of hope and fear. Thus Job was jealous over his children, lest they had sinned against God, ch. i. 5. Professors of religion ought in this way to be jealous over themselves and over one another ; for it is no breach of charity to suspect ill when we intend well. The greater our love to others the more anxious will be our care concerning them lest they should be mistaken now and should miscarry at last. Evil surmisings are highly culpable, but godly jealousies are commendable. "I fear," says the apostle in another place "lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain," Gal. iv. 11.

Our author then proceeds to consider,

- I. The grounds and reasons of the apostle's jealousy.
- II. The peculiar properties of it : "godly jealousy."

ARGUMENTATIVE EXORDIUMS.

Sometimes it may be proper to enter somewhat at large into the proof of one or more propositions closely connected with the doctrine of the text, in order to the more full and luminous elucidation of the text itself, particularly where such doctrines have been strongly opposed, and where the passage under consideration has been wrested from its proper meaning to serve the purposes of a party.

Some examples of this kind will be given in the Topical Exordiums, particularly under the twenty-second Topic. The following will therefore be sufficient in this place :—

Simeon on Matt. xii. 36, 37 : "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof," &c.

There is not any plainer or more acknowledged truth, in relation to natural things, than that "a tree is known by its fruit." In morals the same would be equally obvious if we were equally unbiassed in our judgment respecting it. But, if we speak of morals, we must not confine our attention to actions only : we must take also the words of men into the account, since by them the heart betrays itself no less than by overt acts. The communications which proceed from the heart will, of necessity, correspond with the treasures which abound in it, even as a stream will manifest the quality of the fountain from which it flows. Our blessed Lord has determined this point, and grounded on it a most solemn declaration, which is of the utmost importance to every child of man : "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

I. Explain this declaration.

II. Point out the proper use to be made of it.

The same author, on Matt. xxvi. 24: "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

"Known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." But the fore-ordination of God does not in any degree affect the responsibility of man. Man is altogether a free-agent in every thing that he does, whether it be good or evil. The Spirit of God may move him, or Satan may tempt him; but he does nothing without the concurrence of his own will. Hence, when Peter tells the Jews that our blessed Lord was "delivered up to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," he still fixed the guilt of his death on them, saying, "Him you have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. So, in the passage before us, our blessed Lord speaks to the same effect. It had been written of him, "My own familiar friend, whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me:" compare ver. 23 with Ps. xli. 9. And in reference to this prediction, our Lord says, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

OBSERVATIONAL EXORDIUMS.

Observational exordiums, or those which are formed on some general remark with its illustration, are by far the most numerous. Such remark may be theological or critical, historical or philosophical, practical or experimental; in short, of any kind whatever that suits the purpose of the preacher, and is sufficiently connected with the subject he is about to discuss. Even when the context requires to be noticed, which indeed was the general practice of our old writers, and also when the design of the preacher leads him to adopt an expository exordium, an introductory remark may, as we have seen, be employed with advantage. But in other cases the observation may be more fully brought out and illustrated. Such observation should of course be sensible and judicious, and admit of an easy transition to the text. The preacher must also be careful not to use the same observation too frequently: I have noticed this fault even in Blair.

Two or three examples of a general character shall close this Lecture.

Blair on 1 Cor. xiii. 5: "Charity thinketh no evil."

Observation.

Religion and government are the two great foundations of order and comfort among mankind.

Illustration.

Government restrains the outrages and crimes which would be subversive of society, secures the property and defends the lives of its subjects. Human laws however can extend no further than to the actions of men. Though they protect us from external violence, they leave us open on different sides to be wounded. By the vices which prevail in society our tranquillity may be disturbed, and our lives in various ways embittered, while government can give us no redress. Religion goes a step further, and strikes at the root of those disorders which occasion so much misery in the world. Its professed scope is to regulate, not actions alone, but the temper and inclinations. By this means it ascends to the sources of conduct; and very ineffectual would the wisest system of legislation prove for the happiness of mankind if it did not derive aid from religion, in softening the dispositions of men, and checking many of those evil passions to which the influence of law cannot possibly reach.

Transition.

Hence in the description which the apostle gives of charity—that great principle in the Christian system—he explains its operation, not by the actions to which it gives rise, but by the disposition which it produces in the heart. He justly supposes that, if the temper be duly regulated, propriety of action will follow, and good order will take place in external behaviour. Of those characters of charity, I have chosen one

for the subject of this discourse, which leads to the consideration of a virtue highly important to us, both as Christians and as members of society.

In the following example the observation is not illustrated except by those circumstances which form the proper transition to the subject. It is on Matt. xxvi. 47 : "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Observation.

The instructions of our Lord commonly arose out of circumstances, and these were managed with consummate wisdom.

Illustration and Transition.

At the time to which our text refers, he pointed out to his disciples that their present circumstances imperiously called upon them for watchfulness and prayer. As renewed persons they had no disinclination to this; nay, had a strong desire to be found in it; yet our Lord found them in a state of great inaptitude, even in compliance with his request or injunction, and at a time when they must have known that their Master was under some very uncommon trouble. The infirmities of the flesh prevailed against their better judgment, and they fell asleep; yet, instead of severe rebuke, the Saviour finds that kind and tender apology for them of which the words of the text consist : "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Atterbury, vol. i., p. 203, on Ecces. vii. 2 : "It is better to go to the house of mourning," &c.

Observation.

The first step towards happiness is to correct our false opinions concerning it.

Illustration.

We shall thus learn to esteem every thing properly, that is, not according to that rate and value which the world, or our mistaken imaginations, may have placed upon it, but according to that which in itself, and in the account of right reason and scripture, it really bears.

The preacher therefore has, in this chapter, laid together a set of religious paradoxes which, however they may startle us or shock us upon the first hearing, yet, when closely examined, will appear to be clear and unquestionable truths, by which the whole of our lives ought to be regulated.

The author then names a few of those paradoxes, and thus makes it a transition to the text.

Jay on Ps. cxviii. 15 : "The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacle of the righteous."

Observation.

Nothing can more usefully engage our attention than human nature and human life.

Illustration.

The proper study of mankind is man. His origin and his end, the structure of his body and the powers of his mind, his situation, and his connexions, are all capable of yielding us boundless and edifying instruction.

In observing mankind, the private and familiar views of their character are by far the most curious, interesting, and profitable. The greater part of our history is composed of minute and common incidents, and little and ordinary things serve more to discover a man, and conduce more to render him useful, than splendid and rare occurrences. Abroad a man appears cautious; at home he is unreserved. Abroad he is artificial; at home he is real. Abroad he is useful; at home he is necessary. And of this we may rest assured, that a man is in truth what he is in his own family, whether vicious or virtuous, tyrannical or mild, miserable or happy.

Transition.

My brethren, we are going to enter one of those houses of which David speaks—a tabernacle filled with the voice of rejoicing. Domestic felicity is our present subject.

These examples are in the true style of observation and illustration, and they very happily join with their respective texts. To such exordiums the commendation of Blair applies :—"It is a great beauty in an introduction when it can be made to turn on some thought fully brought out and illustrated, especially if that thought has a close connexion with the discourse

following, and at the same time does not anticipate anything that is afterwards to be introduced in a more proper place."

Besides the four kinds of exordium already noticed, I may also mention a fifth kind which is sometimes adopted, namely,

APPLICATORY EXORDIUM.

It may appear somewhat out of order to apply a subject before it is explained and illustrated, nevertheless, if used sparingly, it is admissible, and, if well managed, such exordiums are calculated to arouse the attention of the people, and prepare them for the remaining parts of the discourse.

It is said of Massillon that when he ascended the pulpit for the first time he felt for a moment somewhat depressed, in consequence of the listless and inattentive appearance which his audience presented; but, calling to mind the supreme importance of his commission, he addressed them in his exordium in so striking a manner as at once to arouse and rivet their attention. "If" said he, "a cause the most important that could be conceived were to be tried at the bar before qualified judges,—if this cause interested yourselves in particular,—if the eyes of the whole kingdom were fixed upon the event,—if the most eminent counsel were employed on both sides,—and if you had heard from your infancy of this yet undetermined trial,—would you not all listen with breathless attention and high expectation to the pleadings on each side? Would not all your hopes and fears be hinged upon the final decision? And yet, let me tell you, you have at this moment a cause of much greater importance before you—a cause in which not one nation, but all the world are spectators,—a cause tried not before a fallible tribunal, but before the awful throne of heaven,—a cause in which not your temporal and transitory interests are the subjects of debate, but your eternal happiness or misery. That cause is still undetermined, though it is possible that the very moment in which I am speaking may fix for ever the irrevocable decision."

Our own writers furnish specimens of appeal which if less striking are perhaps equally well adapted to arouse attention and interest the audience in the subject of discussion. The following will be sufficient for the purpose of illustration:—

Simeon on 1 Tim. i. 16: "I obtained mercy," &c.

The first question that should occur to our minds is this, *Have I obtained mercy?* If a favourable answer can be returned to that, we should inquire in what manner, and for what ends, mercy has been shown us? There can be no doubt but that, if persons who are converted to God would frequently look back upon the state in which they were previously to their conversion, they would find the retrospect attended with the most beneficial consequences. Their recollection would furnish them with innumerable facts which would tend to humble them in the dust, and to excite adoring thoughts of that grace which has so distinguished them. St. Paul appears to have taken peculiar pleasure in this exercise of mind, &c., from which we shall consider,

I. The circumstances under which he obtained mercy.

II. The ends for which mercy was granted to him.

Jay on 1 Kings xviii. 12: "I fear the Lord from my youth." After announcing his intention to exhibit Obadiah as an example for imitation, but before entering on the divisions of his discourse, our author thus proceeds in a way of direct address to young people:—

In your imitation of him many are concerned, though none are so deeply interested as yourselves. The preacher who addresses you is concerned. He longs "after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Indeed, if ministers desire to be useful, they cannot be

indifferent to you. You would prove their best helpers; you would rouse the careless; you would reproach those of riper years; you would decide the wavering young. It is in your power to build up our churches and to change the moral character of our neighbourhood. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad" for you, "and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Behold, standing near, your preacher, your friends, your relations, your parents, hearing for you with trembling, and prayers, and tears. Thy father is saying, "My son, if thou be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." The woman who bore thee is saying, "What, my son, and what the son of my womb, and what the son of my vows?"

Behold too your fellow-citizens, your countrymen. Imagine all those assembled here this evening with whom you are to have any future connexions by friendship, by alliance, by business, whose kindred you are to espouse, whose offices you are to fill. These I ask, Is it a matter of indifference whether the rising generation be infidel and immoral; or influenced by conscience and governed by scripture? Where is the person who has any regard for the welfare of the nation, for social order, for relative life, for personal happiness, who would not immediately exclaim, "Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters may be as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace."

Behold the blessed God looking down from heaven, blending his claims with your welfare, and urging the language of command and of promise: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" "those that seek me early shall find me."

Transition.

There are parties concerned in the success of this endeavour, but my young friends, there are characters here more deeply interested than all those—they are yourselves.

To be pious in early years is to be "wise for yourselves;" it is your privilege, shall I say, more than your duty?—Yes, the gain will be principally your own. How shall I convince you of this? How shall I make you feel the importance of it? We shall take three views of the subject:—We shall,

I. Consider youth as the most favourable season in which to commence a religious course.

II. Show the beneficial influence of early piety over your future life.

III. Examine, in this awful concern the consequences of procrastination.

From these examples it will be obvious that all the different parts of a discourse will admit of an interchange one with another. Exposition, for instance, commonly takes place in the body of discourse, but, as we have seen, it may lead in the exordium. Many sermons are composed of observations; but observation also lends its assistance to introduce any subject treated textually; for in such sermons we want not exposition upon exposition, or very rarely. The body of a sermon is the most natural place for argument, and yet we see that sometimes this may be transferred to the exordium.

In fact, there are certain essential parts in every sermon; they admit a vast variety of interchange one with another; but each and every part must appear somewhere, and the interchanges here admitted will not offend the understanding of the hearer, provided the judgment of the preacher properly leads the way.

LECTURE XXIX.

TOPICAL EXORDIUMS, ETC.

HAVING endeavoured in the preceding Lecture, to illustrate the different kinds of exordium, it will now be my business to point out some of those materials of which the young preacher may properly avail himself in the construction of this part of his discourses. And here the first place will

be given to examples formed on Claude's Topics, in order to show their applicability to this particular service; and, after presenting these in their order, I shall add a few supplementary Topics which appear to be peculiarly suited to exordiums. It may be proper to observe that these Topics may furnish the chief materials, whatever *kind* of exordium you may think proper to adopt. Some of them, for instance, appear more especially adapted to the narrative, as *person, time, place, &c.*, others to the explicatory, as *principles, end proposed, distinguish and define, &c.*, others to the argumentative, as *consider ground, refute objections, &c.*, whilst almost all of them may, in some way or other, find a place in the observational. But the examples will, I doubt not, afford the best illustration of this matter; and therefore I hasten to lay these before you.

I. RISE FROM SPECIES TO GENUS.

Thus Beddome, on Rom. ii. 15, "Their consciences also bearing witness," takes occasion from a particular kind of witnessing to discuss, in his introduction, the more general idea. The author says,

At the mouth of two or three witnesses, it is said, shall every word be established. Thus the record which God has given of his Son is confirmed by "three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;" and "by three on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood." Thus also there will be credible and authentic witnesses against the sinner in the great day: God himself, who knows our secret thoughts, is an eye and ear witness of all we do and say. Also the divine word, especially the holy and righteous law of God; "for," says our Lord to the Jews, "there is one that accuseth, even Moses, in whom you trust." The word accuses the penitent sinner to himself and the impenitent sinner to God. Conscience also, which will then be freed from every corrupt bias, and roused from its present state of stupefaction. There are times, even in this world, when conscience is aroused to do its office, and in such a manner as to make the sinner tremble. The apostle is speaking of the heathen world when he says, "Their consciences also bearing them witness;" but it may be applied to all mankind.

He then returns to the particular subject of the text. The language is rough, but it suits a certain subject.

Simeon on Mark x. 49, 50. The text specifies how our Lord acted on a *particular occasion*; and our author enters in his introduction into the conduct which he uniformly manifested *on all occasions*.

Our Lord, like the sun in the firmament, prosecuted without intermission the great ends of his ministry, diffusing innumerable blessings wheresoever he bent his course.

By this remark he connects the single fact before him with the character and conduct of Christ. There is a noble abruptness in this exordium that is calculated to arrest attention. Claude indeed condemns the practice of introducing a sermon by a metaphor or a simile, yet he also mentions an exception; and I cannot but think this instance of Mr. Simeon's not only allowable, but also very beautiful.

In the following example the text furnishes an instance of the fidelity of scripture history, from which the preacher takes occasion to mark the fidelity of scripture history in general.

Simeon on Gen. xx. 9: "Then Abimelech said unto Abraham, What hast thou done unto us?" &c.

We admire the fidelity of scripture history. There is not a saint, however eminent, but his faults are reported as faithfully as his virtues. And we are constrained to acknowledge that the best of men, when they come into temptation, are weak and fallible as others if they be not succoured from above. We are habituated to behold

Abraham as a burning and shining light, but now we are called to view him under an eclipse. We see the father of the faithful drawing upon himself a just rebuke, and that, too, not for some slight defect in his obedience, but for a great and heinous transgression.

The same author on 1 Pet. i. 6, 7 : "Wherein you greatly rejoice," &c. Peter here writes in order to console the people of God. This suggests the more general idea that it is the duty of ministers to comfort them ; and this again suggests a remark on the general duties of the ministry. Thus :—

The enlightening and converting of souls are the first objects of a minister's attention.

Nevertheless the comforting of God's people is also an essential part of his duty, as Isa. xl. 1.

Peter is a striking pattern of a sympathizing and affectionate pastor. He writes to the scattered people of God, who needed consolation, &c.

The same author on Luke vi. 47—49 : "Whosoever cometh to me," &c." From the description here given of different characters our author passes into the importance of ministerial discrimination generally.

It is of great importance, in preaching the gospel, to discriminate between the different characters to whom we deliver our message and to separate the precious from the vile. If this be neglected, the wicked will hold fast their delusions and the righteous continue in bondage to their fears ; but, if we be faithful in the discharge of this part of our duty, those among whom we minister will be led to a knowledge of their own character and condition. Our blessed Lord, at the conclusion of his sermon on the mount, shows how we should apply our subjects to the hearts and consciences of our hearers.

Jay on 2 Pet. i. 11 : "For so an entrance shall be administered, &c. The text contains the particular argument employed by the apostle to urge Christians to such a course of conduct as tended to make their calling and election sure. Our author takes occasion in his exordium to speak of that *class* of motives to which the apostle's argument belongs.

My brethren, among the various motives with which revelation abounds, there are none more solemn and impressive than those which are derived from death. Hence the sacred writers often refer to it. They remind us of the suddenness of its arrival ; they forewarn us of the nearness of its approach ; they also intimate the importance of the consequences, as terminating this state of trial, sealing up our characters, and transmitting them to the judgment of the great day, to be opened and published before an assembled world.

The apostle urges the *manner* of our dying ; he would have us die *well*—not only in a state of salvation, but in peace and triumph, so that "an *entrance* may be administered abundantly, &c."

Simcon on Isa. vi. 5—7 : "Then said I, Woe is me !" &c. The particular vision of the prophet, during which these words were uttered, leads to a remark upon the subject of dreams and visions in general, &c.

Prior to the full revelation of himself in the gospel, God was pleased to communicate his mind and will to men by dreams and visions, which since the completion of the sacred canon are no longer to be expected. But we must not therefore imagine that the revelations so made are less interesting to us than those which proceeded more immediately from the enlightening influences of the Holy Ghost. The same importance must be attached to every thing which God has spoken, so far, at least, as the instruction which is intended to be conveyed is itself important. For instance, the vision of Isaiah seems to have been a peculiar favour vouchsafed to him ; but still it contains many instructive lessons for us : and in this two-fold view we will consider it.

In looking back to the preceding Lecture, you will perceive that many of

the examples there given are formed on this Topic, and a very numerous train of similar examples might be added. It is in fact the most suitable of all the Topics for an exordium, for one of the first operations of a cultivated mind upon any subject is that which connects such subject with the class to which it may belong. If we are about to discourse on the subject of drunkenness, or covetousness, or any particular act of wickedness, nothing can be more natural than to commence with some remark upon the depravity of the human heart, or upon sin in general: if our text contains a statement or a threatening of any particular judgment, the mind immediately reverts to the justice of God, to his judgments in general, &c.; if any blessing, promised or conferred, forms the subject of discourse, then we are led to some remark upon the benevolence or the mercy of Jehovah, or upon the variety, importance, or excellence of those blessings which are promised in his word, &c.

II. DESCEND FROM GENUS TO SPECIES.

This Topic is certainly more adapted to suggest a mode of discussion, or thoughts of illustration, than to afford any hints for an exordium; yet an occasional reference to it may serve to promote that variety which it is desirable to preserve. Thus, for instance, suppose you had been preaching a sermon, or a course of sermons, on the attributes of God, which you designed to improve by a discourse on Matt. v. 48: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect"—it might be very proper in your exordium to descend from the general truth—divine perfection—and to recapitulate the particular attributes on which you had previously discoursed at large, &c.

III. DIFFERENT CHARACTERS OF A VIRTUE OR VICE.

This Topic may occasionally occupy the exordium, although, like the last, it is more suited to the body of a discourse. In such case your description must of course be very brief; and, if you have previously preached upon the virtue or vice under consideration, the principal points of your sermon may be thrown together in a concise manner for an exordium.

Blair has an exordium of this kind prefixed to his sermon on Gal. vi. 9: "Let us not be weary in well-doing," &c. He gives a brief description of the properties of discontent, and makes this the foundation of an observational discourse, the last head of which is not, however, put in the form of an observation, but stands forth in awkward incongruity with the rest.

Discontent is the most general of all the evils which trouble the life of man. It is a disease which every where finds materials to feed itself: if real distresses be wanting, it substitutes such as are imaginary in their place. It converts even the good things of the world, when they have been long enjoyed, into occasions of disgust. In the midst of prosperity it disposes us to complain, and renders tranquillity tiresome only because it is uniform. There is no wonder that this spirit of restlessness and dissatisfaction, which corrupts every terrestrial enjoyment, should have sometimes penetrated into the region of virtue. Good men are not without their frailties; and the perverseness incident to human nature too readily leads those who become weary of all other things to be weary, also, in well-doing. The pleasure expected in devotion sometimes fails, and the injustice of the world often sours and frets them. Friends prove ungrateful; enemies misrepresent, rivals supplant them: and part, at least, of the mortifications which they suffer they begin to ascribe to virtue. Is this all the reward of serving God, and renouncing the pleasures of sin? "Verily, in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency. Behold, the ungodly prosper in the world, and have more than heart can wish; while all the day long I am plagued, and chastened every morning." To such persons as these, and to all who are in hazard

of being infected with their spirit, I now address myself. In reply to their complaints, I purpose to mention some considerations from which I hope to make it appear that there is no sufficient reason for our being weary in well-doing, and that, taking human life upon the whole, virtue is far the most eligible portion of man.

I. Uneasiness and dissatisfaction are inseparable, in some degree, from every state on earth.

II. The uneasiness belonging to a sinful course is far greater than that which attends a course of well-doing.

III. The resources of virtue are much greater than those of the world, the compensations which it makes for our distresses far more valuable.

IV. The assured hope which good men enjoy of a full reward at last.

Simeon on Matt. x. 8: "Freely you have received freely give."

Compassion for the wants and miseries of men is a very distinguished feature of the Christian character. It is a lovely grace, even when it has respect only to the temporal necessities of mankind; * * * * but it is of a far higher stamp when it is called forth by a view of their spiritual wants, and seeks to administer to their eternal welfare. * * * * Such was the feeling which our blessed Lord and Saviour chiefly manifested on the occasion before us, and sought to diffuse amongst those who were to be his more immediate followers and servants: "When he saw the multitudes," we are told, "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

* * The asterisks mark the openings where the description might very properly be extended by this Topic.

IV. THE RELATION OF ONE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER.

The Preacher, vol i., p. 134, on Phil. iii. 12: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," &c.

There is an intimate connexion (or relation) between justification by the righteousness of Christ and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; for in the same breath in which the apostle prays for the one he also prays for the other.

Some who are advocates for free justification deny both the doctrine of sanctification and progressive holiness; but here they are united.

Three things are taught us in the text; namely, the origin, the progress, and the end of true religion.

South on Ps. xxxix. 9: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Here the subject is *submission*, and our author takes occasion to remark on the graces of faith, &c., and to mark their mutual dependence and relation.

If we would give one general account of all the duties that are incumbent upon a Christian, we shall find them reducible to these three, *faith, obedience, and patience*: and the vital principle that animates and runs through them all is *submission*, faith being a submission of our understanding to what God commands us to believe, obedience being a submission of our will to what God commands us to do, and, lastly, patience being a submission of the whole man to what God commands us to suffer.

It is one of the arts of patience still to be beforehand with an affliction, and to expect that at all times which a man may endure at any; and, since the healthiest of men may be sick, it is but prudent, while they are well, to have a remedy about them.

In the text we have these two general parts:

I. David's submissive deportment under a sharp affliction: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth."

II. The ground and reason of such his deportment, which was the procedure of that affliction from God: "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

Blair on Acts x. 38, "Jesus of Nazareth—who went about doing good,"—avails himself of this Topic, by considering the character of Christ under an aspect different from that which the text presents, but still related to it. He observes.

There are two great aspects under which we may contemplate the appearance of

our blessed Lord on the earth; one is his coming into the world in order to make expiation to divine justice, by his sufferings and death, for the guilt of the human race; the other is his coming to act as the enlightener and reformer of the world by his doctrine and his life. The former of these views is the most sublime, as on the atonement which he made for us depend all our hopes of the pardon of sin and of life eternal. In the other view it is also of high importance that all Christians should frequently consider him, in order to the proper regulation of their conduct: the observance of his example is no less necessary for this purpose, than attention to his doctrine; for, as by his doctrine he taught us what we are bound to do, so in his example he showed us what we ought to be.

V. THINGS IMPLIED.

The Preacher, vol v. p. 291, contains an example quite in point, on Matt. xii. 30: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

Several things are implied in this language—

1. That Christ is engaged in an important contest, and calls upon us to take a part with him. The cause which he has undertaken is the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of God, against the interests of falsehood, of sin, and of Satan. The great majority of mankind are on the side of the latter; Christ calls on us to come off, and take sides with him.

2. That to be with Christ, in this contest, is to embrace the gospel, to obey its precepts, and openly to profess our adherence to the Saviour. And he that will be his disciple must take up his cross, deny himself, and follow him.

3. That there is a description of characters who are not with Christ, and yet would not wish to be thought his enemies; and to these the words of the text principally refer. Who then are they? Not the openly profane, or avowed unbeliever, but the undecided and half-hearted, who appear to be between Christ and the world, who inhabit the confines of religion and irreligion, and are occasionally on one side and then on the other. This state of indecision in religious matters is here construed into direct and positive enmity; for "he that is not with me," saith Christ, "is against me."

This is rather too stiff for the present day; but the same thoughts might be presented in a more continuous and agreeable manner, and would thus form a very suitable introduction to the general divisions, which are,

I. Endeavour to point out a few of those characters which may be considered as undecided.

II. Consider the equity and propriety of the construction put upon such indecision, or what grounds there are for its being accounted enmity.

VI. PERSON SPEAKING OR ACTING.

This is a Topic quite suited to exordiums. Some preachers are however accustomed to recur to it by far too often; it is of very easy application, and always has some connexion with the subject, and it is therefore necessary to guard against its too frequent occurrence. The following examples are appropriate:—

Simeon on Isa. i. 2, 3: "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken," &c.

It is the Lord God Almighty that now speaks respecting us. "Let every ear attend; let every heart be humbled in the dust before him. He has a controversy with us and a complaint against us; and he summons both heaven and earth to attend the truth of his charge and the equity of his judgment. Though he is a Sovereign, and amenable to none, yet he does frequently make his appeals to the whole creation, and constitute creatures judges between himself and us, Mic. vi. 2. In this charge we behold,

I. The evil we have committed.

II. The extent of our criminality.

Blair, on Job x. 1: "My soul is weary of my life."

Job, in the first part of his days, was the greatest of all the men in the East.

His possessions were large; his family was numerous and flourishing; his own character was fair and blameless. Yet this man it pleased God to visit with extraordinary reverses of fortune. He was robbed of his whole substance. His sons and daughters all perished; and he himself, fallen from his high estate, childless, and reduced to poverty, was smitten with a sore disease. His friends came about him, seemingly with the purpose of administering comfort. But, from a harsh and ill-founded construction of the intention of Providence in his disasters, they only added to his sorrows by unjust upbraiding. Hence those many pathetic lamentations with which his book abounds, poured forth in the most beautiful and touching strain of oriental poetry. In one of those hours of lamentation the sentiment in the text was uttered: "My soul is weary of my life," a sentiment which surely, if any situation can justify it, was allowable in the case of Job.

In situations very different from that of Job, under calamities far less severe, it is not uncommon to find such a sentiment working in the heart, and sometimes breaking forth from the lips of men. Many, very many, there are who, on one occasion or other, have experienced this weariness of life, and been tempted to wish that it would come to a close. Let us now examine in what circumstances this feeling may be deemed excusable, in what it is to be held sinful, and under what restrictions we may, on any occasion, be permitted to say, "My soul is weary of my life."

Walker makes a judicious use of this Topic in the exordium of his sermon on Ps. xxxix. 12: "For I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

Had these words been spoken by one of the Rechabites, who were commanded by their father Jonadab "that they should drink no wine, neither build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any, but that they should dwell in tents all their days," we might perhaps have considered them as pointing merely at the *peculiarities* of that sequestered tribe, by which they were distinguished from the rest of mankind; but as they are the words of David, who himself was a king, one of the lords of this earth, who had every inducement to magnify his office and to make his importance appear in its utmost extent, they can lie under no suspicion of partiality, and therefore challenge the greatest regard.

It is true that he wrote this psalm under the heavy pressure of affliction; but we find him using the same language in the height of his prosperity: "We are strangers," said he, "before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding," 1 Chron. xxix. 15. Never did the Jewish nation appear to be more at home than at that time. As for David, his happiness was so complete that, instead of asking any additional favours, he could hardly find words to express his gratitude for those he had already received. Yet amidst all his affluence, when he possessed every outward comfort his heart could wish, still he called himself a stranger and a sojourner before God. We must therefore consider the words of my text as expressing the fixed and habitual sentiments of David's heart. In his most prosperous condition he did not look upon this earth as his home, but extended his views to the heavenly world, that glorious and permanent inheritance of the saints, which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away."

Among the various objects of enquiry that might readily occur to us upon reading this passage, the two following appear to me the most interesting and profitable:—

I. Whence is it that holy men consider themselves as strangers and sojourners upon earth?

II. What manner of life is most expressive of this character, and best suited to the condition of strangers and sojourners?

The same author on Josh. xxiii. 11: "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that you love the Lord your God."

These are the words of a soldier and a saint—a soldier equally brave and successful, a saint distinguished by the testimony of God himself. They are the words of Joshua, the victorious leader of God's ancient people, and make a part of that solemn valedictory speech which he pronounced in a national assembly of his countrymen a little before his death. The same happy union of fortitude and piety which had rendered his active life so glorious still shone forth, with undiminished strength, to adorn the concluding scene.

Never did the magnanimity of the soldier, never did the piety of the saint, never

did the generous zeal of the patriot, appear with more becoming grace and dignity than when this great and good man rose up in the presence of all his brethren, and thus addressed the tribes of Israel: "I am old and stricken in age; and you have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you," &c. An address more worthy of the speaker, or better adapted to those who heard it, cannot be devised than that which these verses present to our view. Long had he been dead to pride and self-interest. He sought not his own praise, but the honour of his God and the prosperity of his brethren. He reminds them, indeed, that he had often led them to victory and triumph; but with the same breath he reminds them, also, "that it was the Lord their God that fought for them." To him therefore the sole tribute of praise was due. This was the important truth which Joshua chiefly recommended to the attention of his hearers. And now, knowing that the time of his departure was at hand, as the last and strongest proof of his affection and care, with the authority of a governor he commands, with the bowels of a father he entreats, and, with all the seriousness of a dying saint, he obtests them "to love the Lord their God."

VII. STATE OF PERSON SPEAKING, ETC.

Blair has a very beautiful exordium on this Topic. The text is Esther v. 13: "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

These are the words of one who, though high in station and in power, confessed himself to be miserable. Haman, an Amalekite, who inherited all the ancient enmity of his race to the Jewish nation, had been advanced by Ahasuerus to the chief dignity in his kingdom. He appears, from what is recorded of him, to have been a very wicked minister. Raised to greatness without merit, he employed his power solely for the gratification of his passions. As the honours which he possessed were next to royal, his pride was every day fed with that servile homage which is peculiar to Asiatic courts, and all the servants of the king prostrated themselves before him. In the midst of this general adulation, one person only stooped not to Haman. This was Mordecai the Jew, who, knowing this Amalekite to be an enemy to the people of God, and, with virtuous indignation despising that insolence of prosperity with which he saw him lifted up, "bowed not, nor did him reverence." On this appearance of disrespect from Mordecai, Haman was full of wrath, "but he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone." Personal revenge was not sufficient to satisfy him. So violent and black were his passions that he resolved to exterminate the whole nation to which Mordecai belonged. Abusing, for this cruel purpose, the favour of his credulous sovereign, he obtained a decree to be set forth, that, against a certain day, all the Jews throughout the Persian dominions should be put to the sword. Meanwhile, confident of success, and blind to approaching ruin, he continued exulting in his prosperity. Invited by Ahasuerus to a royal banquet which Esther the queen had prepared, "he went forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart." But behold how slight an incident was sufficient to poison his joy! As he went forth, he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and observed that he still refused to do him homage: "He stood not up, nor was moved for him," although he well knew the formidable designs which Haman was preparing to execute.

One private man, who despised his greatness and disdained submission, while a whole kingdom trembled before him—one spirit, which the utmost stretch of his power could neither subdue nor humble—blasted his triumphs. His whole soul was shaken with a storm of passion. Wrath, pride, and a desire of revenge, rose into fury. With difficulty he restrained himself in public; but, as soon as he came to his own house, he was forced to disclose the agony of his mind. He gathered together his friends and family, with Zeresh his wife. "He told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. He said, moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow also I am invited unto her with the king." After this preamble, what is the conclusion?—"Yet all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

This illustration of the state and character of Haman admirably prepares for the following observations, which form the subject of the discourse:—

- I. How miserable is vice when one guilty passion creates so much torment !
- II. How unavailing is prosperity, when, in the height of it, a single disappointment can destroy the relish of all its pleasures !
- III. How weak is human nature, which, in the absence of real, is thus prone to form to itself imaginary woes !

The same author on Eccles. vii. 2—4 : "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting," &c.

Many of the maxims contained in the book of Ecclesiastes will appear strange sayings to the men of the world. But, when they reflect on the state and character of him who delivers them, they cannot but admit that his tenets deserve a serious and attentive examination. For they are not the doctrines of a pedant, who, from an obscure retirement, declaims against pleasures which he never knew. They are not the invectives of a disappointed man, who takes revenge upon the world by satirizing those enjoyments which he sought in vain to obtain. They are the conclusions of a great and prosperous prince, who had once given full scope to his desires, who was thoroughly acquainted with life in its most flattering scenes, and who now, reviewing all that he had enjoyed, delivers to us the result of long experience and tried wisdom. None of his principles seem, at first view, more dubious and exceptionable than those which the text presents. To assert that sorrow is preferable to mirth, and the house of mourning to the house of feasting,—to advise men to choose mortification and sadness when it is in their power to indulge in joy,—may appear harsh and unreasonable doctrines. Those may perhaps be accounted enemies to the innocent enjoyment of life who give countenance to so severe a system and thereby increase the gloom which already sits sufficiently heavy on the condition of man. But let this censure be suspended, until we examine with care into the spirit and meaning of the sentiments here delivered.

The same author, with some slight alterations, on Matt. xxvi. 29 : "I will not drink henceforth," &c.

Jesus was now descending to the lowest stage of suffering. He had for three years of his public ministry been watched with a jealous eye by his enemies, and the time had come when they were to prevail against him. A few friends he had from the beginning selected, who, in every vicissitude to the present time, remained faithfully attached to him. With these friends he was now meeting for the last time, on the very evening in which he was betrayed and seized. He perfectly knew all that was to befall him ; he knew that he now sat down for the last time with those who had been the companions of his labours, the confidants of all his griefs. He knew that within a few hours he was to be torn from this loved society by a band of ruffians, and by to-morrow was to be publicly arraigned as a malefactor ; and with a heart full of tenderness he said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover before I suffer," &c.

When it is considered that Blair had no design to touch upon this topic in the discussion of his subject, which was "a preparation for death," there was great propriety in thus treating in his exordium of the state of the speaker when the words were uttered ; and there was also great judgment in it, as there was the easiest transition possible from the exordium to the subject, as well as the most natural affinity between both. With the sentiments expressed by the doctor in this sermon I have at present no business.

VIII. OBSERVE TIME.

Horsley has an exordium on this Topic, vol i, p. 260. John xiii. 34 : "A new commandment I give unto you," &c.

In that memorable night when divine love and infernal malice had each its perfect work, the night when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of those who thirsted for his blood and the mysterious scheme of man's redemption was brought to its accomplishment, Jesus, having finished the paschal supper, and instituted those holy mysteries by which the thankful remembrance of his oblation of himself is continued in the church until his second coming,—when all this was finished, and nothing now remained of

his great and painful undertaking but the last trying part of it, to be led like a sheep to the slaughter,—in that trying hour, just before he retired to the garden where the power of darkness was to be permitted to display on him its last and utmost effort, Jesus gave it solemnly in charge to the eleven apostles, whose loyalty remained as yet unshaken, “to love one another as he had loved them.”

Jay makes a good use of this Topic in his Morning Exercises, vol. i. Exod. xl. 2: “On the first day of the first month thou shalt set up the tabernacle.”

And why was this period chosen for the erection? God has always reasons for his conduct; but he does not always “give account of his matters.” For first, things that are the same to God are not the same to us. Our goodness extends not to him. Religion regards the exigencies of man. All places as well as times are alike to God, yet we never feel in a common dwelling the solemnity that seizes us in the sanctuary. The first day of the year was no more to God than any other, but it would render the service more memorable and impressive to the people; therefore “on the first day,” &c.

It is well to begin a new year with some good work, and to commence serving God after a new manner. And have we no tabernacle to erect on this first day of this first month? No Ebenezer to raise?

The Preacher, vol. i., on Ps. xxiii. 5: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies,” &c.

This psalm was probably written when David was quietly seated on his throne, after the Lord had delivered him from all his enemies round about. It is full of holy exultation. In the former part he dwells on the character of Jehovah as his Shepherd: and, having been in that capacity himself, he fully understood its import. In the latter part of the psalm he changes the figure, and celebrates the mercy and goodness of God as a Father.

The gratulations in the text would very well suit such a time as that of David's bringing up the ark from the house of Obededom to the city of David with gladness of heart, and when he made a great feast to all the people, (2 Sam. vi. 15—19), or when the promise of establishing his kingdom was delivered to him by Nathan the prophet, ver. 16. And, as it was common at feasts to anoint the head with ointment, so this circumstance is referred to in the text, as well as the abundant provisions which were prepared on such occasions: “Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.”

Simeon on Luke xix. 37, 38: “And when he had come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice,” &c.

During the greater part of our Lord's ministry upon earth he abstained, for the most part, from an avowal of his Messiahship. Now, however, the time having come for him to return to his Father, he openly acknowledged himself to be that king of whom the prophet Zechariah had spoken, saying “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”

IX. PLACE.

Mr. T. Scott, of Aston Sandford, on Phil. i. 27: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

St. Paul wrote this epistle as well as some others, from his prison at Rome: and it is manifest that the Lord was with him, as he had been with Joseph in similar circumstances, which rendered his place of confinement unspeakably more pleasant than a splendid palace with a guilty conscience and ungovernable passions. Instead of dejection, murmurs, or resentment, we find the apostle uniformly employing the language of cheerfulness, confidence, and exultation. He declares that “to him to live was Christ, and to die gain.” All his credit, interest, business, and pleasure in life, consisted in communion with Christ, and earnest endeavours to glorify him and promote his cause; and he was sure that death, in whatever form it should arrest him, would prove his richest advantage.

But though the apostle had a longing “desire to depart and be with Christ, as far

better," yet he was willing to continue on earth "for the furtherance and joy of faith" of his beloved people. As if a pardoned rebel should voluntarily submit to the inconveniences and sufferings of a dungeon, in order to recommend the clemency of his prince to other criminals, or be helpful to those who, having likewise received mercy, were for some reasons retained a while longer in confinement.

Hence he took occasion to exhort the Philippians in the following words, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or whether I be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries."

From the part of this exhortation contained in our text I shall endeavour,

I. To give a compendious view of the gospel of Christ.

II. To show that this gospel, when rightly understood and truly believed, will produce a corresponding conduct and conversation.

III. To mention some leading particulars in which "a conversation becoming the gospel" more especially consists.

IV. To make some remarks on the empathic word "only."

Davies, vol. iii. p. 22, on Acts xvii. 30: "The times of this ignorance God winked at," &c.

We here find Paul in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him at Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning,—a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagns, the most honourable place of that city, &c.

Our author, with great propriety, allotted this Topic to the beginning of his discourse; any where else it would have interrupted his design. In the beginning he turned it to account, by taking occasion to observe that repentance concerned the most celebrated philosophers as well as any other class of persons, and he used this observation as a link to unite his exordium with the subject itself.

It may be here observed, once for all, that it is by no means necessary to confine your remarks in an exordium to the thoughts suggested by one Topic: on the contrary one Topic may frequently usher in another that is intended to occupy a more prominent part. In the example from Scott, though the *place* seems to have suggested the principal thoughts, and the simile in the second paragraph is taken from the same consideration, yet there is a transition from this Topic, and a very proper one, to the *state of the speaker*. The following is an example in which the author makes a very easy and natural transition from the Topic *time* to that of *place*.

The Preacher, vol. vi., on Psalm lxxviii. 15—17: "The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan, a high hill as the hill of Bashan," &c.

Probably these verses were sung at the time of carrying up the ark of God to Mount Zion, to the tabernacle which David had prepared for it. While ascending the holy mount, the hill of Bashan, a very lofty and fertile mountain in Canaan, would be in view. In poetic language, Bashan looks down from its towering heights upon Zion with contempt; nevertheless it was the hill where God would dwell, and where the ark should rest; and therefore it was far superior to the hill of Bashan. It was the seat of holy worship and the dwelling-place of the Most High. It also became the city of the Great King, where stood his palace, the temple of Jerusalem, and where he fixed his imperial throne, Ps. xlviii.

Mount Zion of old was a figure of the church of God, which is his spiritual empire; and, as nations usually strive for pre-eminence, so the heathen and idolatrous kingdoms which surrounded Israel endeavoured to gain the ascendancy over the hill of God. They boasted of their strength and numbers, of their retinue and splendour. Rabshakeh boasted of the kingdom of Assyria that it had conquered all the surrounding countries, and would be the ruin of Israel, Isa. xxxvii. 10. After this, Babylon "leaped as a high hill," and looked down upon Israel with contempt. But Assyria

and Babylon must fall, and all other kingdoms be destroyed; and Christ's kingdom must stand when they are broken in pieces, and shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth: Dan. ii. 35.

The figurative language of the text teaches us to consider,

I. The superior dignity and glory of the church of God over all the kingdoms of this world.

II. That it is much more honourable to be devoted to the service of God than to be exalted to the highest state of worldly glory.

X. PERSONS ADDRESSED.

The examples of exordiums on this Topic are so numerous as to render the task of selection somewhat difficult. The following are offered as furnishing a suitable variety in the application of the Topic:—

Blair on Titus ii. 6: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded." His exordium turns on the peculiar applicability of this exhortation to young persons.

Sobriety of mind is one of those virtues which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates. The uncertainty of its enjoyments checks presumption; the multiplicity of its dangers demands perpetual caution. Moderation, vigilance, and self-government are duties incumbent on all, but especially on such as are beginning the journey of life. To them, therefore, the admonition in the text is, with great propriety, directed, though there is reason to fear that by them it is in hazard of being least regarded. Experience enforces the admonition on the most giddy after they have advanced in years. But the whole state of youthful views and passions is adverse to sobriety of mind. The scenes which present themselves, at our entering upon the world, are uncommonly flattering. Whatever they be in themselves, the lively spirits of the young gild every opening prospect. The field of hope appears to stretch widely before them. Pleasure seems to put forth its blossoms on every side. Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardour, prompt to decide and to choose, averse to hesitate or to enquire, credulous because untaught by experience, rash because unacquainted with danger, headstrong because unsubdued by disappointment. Hence arise the perils of which it is my design at present to warn them.

Though the words of the text are directly addressed to young *men*, yet, as the same admonition is given in a preceding verse to the other sex, the instructions which arise from the text are to be considered as common to both. I intend, first, to show them the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to their conduct; and, next, to point out those virtues which they ought chiefly to cultivate.

Walker on Phil. i. 27: "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ."

It will be to little purpose to enquire what kind of conversation becomes the gospel of Christ till we be satisfied, in the first place, that this charge which was originally addressed to the Philippians, may, with equal propriety be addressed to us. The qualifying particle *only*, with which the apostle introduces the exhortation, plainly denotes that, in his own judgment, the demand he made was no less moderate than it was just. To this conclusion he was naturally led from a consideration of the persons to whom he wrote. His epistle was inscribed, not to unbelieving Jews or Gentiles, but to saints in Christ Jesus, to men who had been converted to the Christian faith, as we learn from the foregoing part of the chapter. And it is material to observe that as Christianity had been treated with peculiar indignity at Philippi, where, by order of the magistrates, Paul and his companion Silas were publicly scourged and cast into prison, therefore the profession of the gospel, in such a place, was justly entitled to the most favourable construction; for nothing less than a deep conviction of its truth and excellence could be supposed to have induced any inhabitant of that city to profess a religion that inevitably exposed him to those contemptuous as well as painful sufferings which a generous and feeling mind would of all others most anxiously wish to avoid.

It is true and it ought to be gratefully acknowledged, that our present situation in these lands is very different from that of the ancient Philippians. Christianity, as reformed from the corruptions of popery, is the established religion of our country; so that if a man believe the gospel of Christ he may with the most perfect safety to his person

and property, make as public a confession of his faith as he inclines. But it is equally true that no man is compelled by the terrors of persecution to profess Christianity if he do not believe it. If then we believe not the gospel, why do we profess it? But, if we do believe what we profess, what an odious as well as disgraceful appearance must we make when our conversation is such as does not become the gospel of Christ! Our practical regard to this demand of the apostle is, in fact, absolutely necessary to preserve the peace and purity of our own hearts, and to support that character which the most profligate reverence, and which all who can discern real beauty and excellence will covet to possess—I mean the venerable character of an upright man.

Having thus prepared the way, by showing that the same charge which was primarily addressed to the Philippians may, with strict justice and propriety, be extended to us, let us now proceed to examine, with attention and candour, the standard to which our conformity is enjoined; in other words, let us enquire into that gospel of Christ to which our conversation—that is, the whole of our external conduct, as expressing the inward temper of our hearts—ought to be suited.

The same author on Job xxxvi. 21: "Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction." Here the exordium commences with our Topic—then passes into the seventh Topic (person speaking), which leads naturally to a summary of Elihu's address,—after which the present Topic is resumed.

These words were addressed to Job, who, from the height of prosperity, was suddenly plunged into the deepest and most complicated distress. They are the words of Elihu—the youngest, but by far the wisest and most candid, of all Job's friends. Moved with zeal for the honour of God, and with compassion to his friend, he unfolds the mysteries of divine Providence, asserts and proves that affliction is designed for the trial of the good as well as for the punishment of the bad, directs Job to the right improvement of his present distress, and comforts him with the prospect of a happy deliverance from it, as soon as his heart should be thoroughly moulded into a meek and patient submission to the will of his God. The latter part of the text contains a heavy censure, for which some of Job's impatient wishes for relief had no doubt given too just occasion. But these expressions, uttered in his haste, he afterwards retracted, and finally came out from the furnace of affliction, like gold tried and refined by the fire.

XI. STATE OF PERSONS ADDRESSED.

Blair on Isa. v. 12: "They regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands."

It appears from many passages in the writings of this prophet that in his days great corruption of manners had begun to take place among the people of Israel. Originally a sober and a religious nation, accustomed to a simple and pastoral life, after they had enlarged their territories by conquest, and acquired wealth by commerce, they gradually contracted habits of luxury, and luxury soon introduced its usual train of attending evils. In the history of all nations the same circulation of manners has been found; and the age in which we live resembles, in this respect, the ages which have gone before it. Forms of iniquity may vary; but the corrupt propensities of men remain at all times much the same. The revolutions from primitive simplicity to the refinements of criminal luxury have been often exhibited on the stage of the world. The reproof directed in the text to the Jews of that ancient age will be found equally applicable to the manners of many in modern times.

The Preacher, vol. i. on Lam. iii. 22: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Here the eighth Topic is associated with the eleventh, though the latter is principally concerned.

The prophet, and the people whom he represents, were at this time in great distress, and the lamentations of the church in captivity are very tenderly described in this chapter. But, though in deep affliction, this was the time to reflect on the divine goodness, and when it could be done to the greatest advantage. Bad as was their present state, and great as was the occasion of their sorrow, it might nevertheless have been worse with them. Instead of being afflicted, and sent into captivity, they

might have been utterly consumed ; and it is ascribed to the Lord's mercies that they had not their full desert. Such is the tendency of sanctified affliction.

Walker commences his exordium on Rev. iii. 18 :—"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c.—by stating his intention to give some account of the person who gave the advice, and also of those whom it was addressed, before he entered upon the consideration of the counsel itself, which was to form the subject of discourse. After commenting at some length on the former of these Topics (the 6th) he makes the following appropriate remarks upon the state of the persons addressed :—

The persons to whom this advice or counsel was addressed were members of Christ's visible church, and inhabitants of the ancient city of Laodicea ; it appears also, from the description given of them, that, with respect to their spiritual concerns, they were in a very degenerate and wretched condition. The first thing taken notice of is their lukewarmness and indifference—a temper which is peculiarly loathsome and offensive to Christ, and therefore he threatens to "spew them out of his mouth," that is, to testify his displeasure against them by some very awful and remarkable judgments. Their state is more fully represented in the verse preceding the text, where the Faithful and True Witness tells them that they were wicked, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ; and, which prodigiously aggravated both their guilt and misery, they knew it not—they were insensible of it ; though they might have known it, yet they would not. Such was their woeful indifference that they did not examine their spiritual condition, but took it for granted, and boasted of it ; that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need for nothing. And now judge, my brethren, whether these persons were worthy of any notice or regard, I mean in a way of mercy ; for that they merited wrath I suppose you will readily allow. Behold, then, and admire the amazing grace and condescension of our Lord. Though the wickedness of the Laodiceans, aggravated by their pride and loathsome indifference, cried aloud for vengeance, and nothing but vengeance, yet lo ! he vouchsafes to counsel them as a friend !

XII. PRINCIPLES.

Jay's Morning Exercises, on John i. 38 : "Where dwellest thou ?"

If we examine the principle of this enquiry we shall find that it was not curiosity, but regard : it was as much as to say, We wish to be better acquainted. John had spoken of him highly, and they had just seen him ; but this, instead of satisfying them, drew forth their desire after further intimacy. Now this is common to all the subjects of divine grace, and arises from their love to him. For love longs to be near the object of attachment : separation is painful ; distance is intolerable ; while intercourse yields a pleasure words can no more describe than paint can describe light and heat, &c.

Blair on Jer. xlix. 11 :—"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them," &c.—commences by some remarks on the divine goodness, the principle which prompted the language of the text, which might possibly be suggested either by this twelfth Topic or by the first Topic.

No subject is more open to general observation, or more confirmed by manifold experience, than the goodness of God. The contemplation of the universe in which we dwell presents it perpetually to our view. Amidst the vast extent of creation we discover no instance of mere pomp, or useless grandeur, but behold every thing contributing to the general good, and rendered subservient to the welfare of the rational or sensible world. In the administration of Providence the same principle of beneficence is conspicuous. The seasons are made regularly to return, and the earth to flourish ; supply is bountifully provided for the wants of all creatures ; and numberless comforts are prepared to sweeten human life. Most justly is he who hath established and who upholds this admirable order of things to be esteemed the Father of mercies ; and, accordingly in this view he is often celebrated in scripture : "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." "His tender mercies are over all his works." "His mercy is great unto the heavens, and it endureth for ever."

It appears worthy of particular observation that there is one light in which, more fre-

quently than in any other, the goodness of God is 'presented to us in the sacred writings, namely, the light of compassion to the distresses of mankind.

The words which I have chosen for the text afford a very amiable view of that compassion which scripture so often ascribes to the Supreme Being: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." It will be worthy of our attention at present to enquire into the reasons why the Almighty is pleased to represent himself so often to us under this view, not only as the just and good ruler of the universe, which is the leading idea we naturally form of him, but as the patron and friend of the distressed part of mankind.

Simeon gives a similar example on Isa. lv. 1—3: "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c,

We cannot sufficiently admire the condescension and grace of God in noticing such insignificant and worthless creatures as we are. That he should provide for our returning wants, and permit us to ask of him the things we stand in need of, may well excite our deepest astonishment. But that he should be as much interested in our welfare as if his own happiness and glory depended on it seems utterly incredible; yet that this is really the case is manifest from the earnest invitations and entreaties which he uses to prevail upon us to accept of mercy. In confirmation of this, we need only to notice the passage before us, in which God, with inexpressible affection, labours to awaken the attention of sinners to their own truest interest, and to bring them to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. In these words we may observe an *invitation* and an *expostulation*.

This kind of exordium is well calculated to precede a discourse of *continued application*. It is soft and insinuating, and yet dignified. In general, strangers to the gospel cannot be more suitably addressed.

A somewhat different use is made of the Topic by Simeon on 1 Chron. xxix. 17: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness."

The true way to form a correct estimate of our actions is to consider the principles from which they flow; for it is very possible that an act which may be highly esteemed among men may be an utter abomination in the sight of God (Luke xvi. 15), on account of the evil which produced it. Jehu obeyed an express command in destroying the house of Ahab, and was even rewarded by God for it; while he was also punished because in what he did he was impelled only by his pride and vanity, instead of consulting, as he ought to have done, the glory of his God. "Man looketh only on the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart," 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The efforts which David made in preparing for the erection of the temple were amazing; yet, if they had proceeded from a desire of man's approbation, they would have been of no value before God. But David sought only to glorify his God; and for this integrity of principle he would appeal, yea, he *did* appeal, in the words of the text, to the heart-searching God.

The applicability of the Topics to exordiums must, I doubt not, have been evident from the foregoing examples; and, as the great variety which has been suggested has already led me further than I expected, I must dismiss the remaining Topics with a briefer notice.

XIII. CONSEQUENCES.

Whether by this term we refer to the *deductions* which any truth may furnish, or to the *benefits* or *disadvantages* naturally resulting from the course of conduct or the particular action mentioned in any text, it must be obvious that this is a Topic not generally available in exordiums. Occasionally, however, it may be advisable to commence an argumentative discourse by referring to the erroneous consequences which have been drawn from our text; and, in a more direct way, the Topic may sometimes be glanced at something after the manner of the following example:—

2 Cor. v. 10—12: "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," &c.

Man, degraded as he is, retains by necessity of nature the power of looking forward to futurity, and weighing the consequences of his present conduct; nay, he has a very strong propensity to this, even beyond what either duty or interest requires. But, while he paints in his delusions a thousand pleasing images of happiness to come, he is always (without the hope of the gospel) averse from looking forward to evil; or, if he think it inevitable, yet he will place it in his imagination at the greatest possible distance. Still the voice of truth will be heard to correct his fancies. Truth again unites with conscience and reason, and will not suffer the man to escape the awful, certain, speedy approach of a futurity big with tremendous consequences beyond all calculation. One would think this sufficient to embitter sin, and render low enjoyments, carnal pleasures, disgusting to his mind. And if the serious thought of future judgment had its due weight, or if it were clearly placed before him with all its force and evidence, it must operate beneficially upon his fears till grace propounds a hope that will entirely change the scene. With such anticipations allow me to show,

I. The certainty of a coming judgment.

II. Its awfulness.

III. Its equity.

IV. Its irreversible nature.

XIV. END PROPOSED.

Frequently it may be proper to commence by a remark on the end proposed by the writer or speaker in the words of the text itself.

Walker on Luke xii. 35—37: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning," &c.

The obvious design of (or end proposed in) this passage is to excite us to a serious preparation for the awful solemnities of death and judgment. We are directed to consider ourselves as servants who have a Master in heaven, of whose return we have the strongest assurance, but are utterly ignorant of the precise time of his coming; and therefore it is both our duty and our interest to be always on our guard and in a fit posture to receive him. The happy consequences of this will be that our Lord will not only approve of our prudence and zealous concern to please him, but he will even delight to honour us. He will not deal with us as servants, but as friends, and will bestow upon us a reward infinitely beyond what any service could entitle us to. So that here we have a short but comprehensive account of the Christian's work and recompense; our duty and encouragements are both set before us.

The same author on Heb. xiii. 5: "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

This comfortable declaration or promise is introduced by the apostle to enforce the duty of contentment (this is the end proposed), to which he had exhorted the Hebrews. Nothing can be more unbecoming in a child of God than dissatisfaction with his present condition or anxiety about his future provision in the world. It is no wonder to see worldly men, whose portion of good things lies wholly upon earth, loading themselves with thick clay, and eagerly grasping every thing which their craving appetites demand. Such persons cannot but be uneasy when they meet with disappointments, because, having nothing desirable in prospect beyond the grave, in losing their present enjoyments they lose their *all*. But the Christian, who knows of a treasure in heaven, a treasure incorruptible in its own nature, and which no fraud nor force can take from him, may and ought to look down with a holy indifference upon every thing here below, resigning himself entirely to the disposal of his heavenly Father, who not only knows what is best for him, but hath likewise obliged himself, by covenant and promise, to make all things work together for the eternal advantage of those who love him and confide in his mercy.

The Preacher, vol. v., on Matt. vi. 19, 20: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c.

On Lord *intended* in these words to check that inordinate attachment to the things of this life, and that eager pursuit of them, which we too frequently witness. He did not mean that it would be absolutely unlawful to lay up treasure on earth either for ourselves or our families : on the contrary, this is what the scriptures both admit and require in certain cases, and for certain purposes. They teach us that, though children are not to lay up for their parents, yet parents are to lay up for their children (2 Cor. xii. 14), and more than this, that we are to provide for our own house and to give to him that needeth, 1 Tim. v. 8. But, if nothing were provided, we should have nothing to give either to our children or to any one besides. The text therefore is designed to show that our hearts must not be *set* on these things, but rather on things that are above, while the world finds only a subordinate place in our esteem. Much less are we to lay up treasure on earth, when we ought to lay it out for God, and in acts of justice and of mercy towards men.

Sometimes the design or intention of any conduct to which the text may refer will form an appropriate exordium, as Simeon on Isa. i. 4, 5 : "Ah ! sinful nation," &c.

The end for which God inflicts punishment upon his people is to bring them to repentance, and thereby prevent the necessity of punishing them in the eternal world ; and, when this end is not answered, he leaves them to themselves, to follow the imaginations of their own hearts, and to bring upon themselves an accumulated weight of wrath. But, before he utterly abandons them, he sends them many solemn warnings, if that by any means he may prevail upon them to turn unto him. Extremely solemn is the reproof which he gave the Jews in the passage before us : he summons heaven and earth to hear his controversy, and to judge between him and his people ; and then, in a way of affectionate expostulation, he threatens to cease from visiting them with parental chastisements, and to leave them to fill up the measure of their iniquities.

The words of our text, accommodated as they may be to our present circumstances, lead us to set before you,

- I. Our sinfulness.
- II. Our incorrigibleness.

The end proposed in the chapter or book (particularly an epistle) whence the text is selected may also be noticed when it is sufficiently connected with the text itself, or when calculated to throw any light upon the subject of discourse. Where this is not the case it would evidently be absurd to drag in the Topic merely for convenience. Thus if I were to speak from Heb. xiii. 2—"Be not forgetful of strangers"—the design of the epistle would not be suitable. This design was to strengthen and encourage the Hebrews under their sufferings, by leading them to contemplate the great object of faith, Christ Jesus, in his original dignity ; by showing the superiority of the Christian dispensation to that of the law, and by setting before them the many worthies of antiquity who did persevere through all difficulties, &c. Now these points have nothing to do with the above text, which is only brought in incidentally, for a special purpose.

Allow me to add that, even where the end proposed in an epistle would be suitable, yet it must not be too often resorted to.

Blair on 1 Tim. i. 5 : "Now the end of the commandment is charity," &c.

It appears from this chapter that one design of the apostle in writing to Timothy was to guard him against certain corrupters of Christian doctrine, who had already arisen in the church. To their false representations of religion he opposes that general view of it which is given in the text. Such summaries of religion frequently occur in the sacred writings and are extremely useful. By the comprehensive energy with which they express the great lines of our duty they both imprint them on our memory and bring them home to our conscience with force. In the progress of this discourse I hope to make it appear that the words of the text afford a most enlarged and instructive view of religion in all its chief parts.

Walker on Rom. iii. 19 : "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," &c.

The great design of this epistle is to lead men to Christ as the only refuge for perishing sinners; and, because none will value a remedy but those who feel their disease and wish for health, the apostle therefore, in the two foregoing chapters, examines the condition both of Gentiles and Jews, under which denominations the whole posterity of Adam are included, and proves, by plain and undeniable facts, that all, without exception, are guilty before God, and consequently that all stand in need of a Saviour. In the verses immediately preceding my text he brings forward several quotations from the Old Testament writings, which give a very strong and melancholy representation of the corruption and depravity of the human kind. But lest the Jews should allege that these, and other passages of the like nature, were only descriptive of the Gentile nations, and could not justly be extended to them, whom God had chosen from the rest of the world and set apart for himself as his peculiar inheritance, he judged it proper to remind them that the sacred books, from which he had taken the above description, were primarily addressed to the Jews, and designed for their instruction and use: "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," consequently these quotations, which are all expressly contained in the law, may and ought to be considered as a just representation of the state of those to whom that law or revelation was given. And he further adds that they were inserted in scripture for this very purpose—that, the plea of innocence being taken away from the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles, "every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

The following example is formed on the end—or one end—proposed in the entire scriptures, and therefore is a variety to our purpose:

Sterne's forty-first sermon—Heb. xii. 14: "Follow peace," &c.

The great end and design of our holy religion, next to the main view of reconciling us to God, was to reconcile us to each other, by teaching us to subdue all those unfriendly dispositions in our nature which unfit us for happiness, and the social enjoyment of the many blessings which God has enabled us to partake in this world; to go on and exalt our nature, and, after the subduction of the most unfriendly of our passions, to plant in their room all those humane and benevolent inclinations which, in imitation of the perfections of God, should dispose us to extend our love and goodness to all our fellow-creatures according to the extent of our abilities, in like manner as the goodness of God extends itself over all the works of the creation. Could this be accomplished, the world would be worth living in, and might be considered by us a foretaste of what we should enter upon hereafter, &c.

Had the author in this instance taken the design of the epistle, he would have done wrong, for the reason before mentioned; but, taking the design of the whole scripture, he is perfectly right, and nothing could better suit his discourse. I may here add that you may occasionally show in an exordium what was not the end proposed, and then pass to what was so.

XV. MANNER.

Blair on Luke xxi. 19: "In your patience possess ye your souls."

The possession of our souls is a very emphatic expression. It describes that state in which a man has both the full command and the undisturbed enjoyment of himself, in opposition to his undergoing some inward agitation which discomposes his powers. Upon the least reflection it must appear how essential such a state of mind is to happiness. He only who thus *possesses his soul* is capable of possessing any other thing with advantage; and, in order to attain and preserve this self-possession, the most important requisite is the habitual exercise of patience.

Simeon on Isa. xliii. 1—3: "Thus saith the Lord that created thee," &c.

It is almost impossible for any one to read the holy scriptures with attention, and not to notice the very remarkable *manner* in which many of the richest promises are introduced. God seems in them to determine to magnify his own grace, and to show that where sin abounded his grace shall much more abound, Rom. v. 20. Let any one read the last two verses of the preceding chapter, and then pass on to the promise, which I have just read, and he will see this illustrated in a very striking point of view, &c.

XVI. COMPARISON.

J. Hill on 2 Cor. v. 17: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," &c.

In Isaiah's prophecy God promises, when Messiah's kingdom is spread throughout all the world, and all nations shall flow unto him, that he will "create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," Isa. lxxv. 17. If we compare this representation with the passage before us, it will be evident that it is in part fulfilled in every true believer, in whose heart the kingdom of Christ is set up, his image formed, and all things that are contrary thereunto have in a measure passed away. "The tabernacle of God is with men," as it is expressed in a parallel place (Rev. xxi. 3, 4), "and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God." This is called new heavens and a new earth, because it is what the believing sinner was an utter stranger to before. Unregenerate sinners are darkness (Eph. v. 8), being without Christ, that is in a state of distance and separation from him; they are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Further, these new heavens and this new earth are said to be created, because the same almighty power which went to the producing of this visible world out of nothing is necessary to produce a principle of spiritual life in the heart of an unrenewed sinner; yea, the soul thus renewed is said to be a new creation, because every part of the man is changed, through this one act of God's almighty power and grace: "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The apostle lays a special emphasis upon it; it is spoken, either by way of attention, implying the care believers ought to take when passing a judgment upon their state Godwards; as if he had said, Do not deceive yourselves; a partial change will not suffice to denominate a man to be in Christ Jesus: "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Or else it comes in by way of admiration and astonishment, as in Rev. xxi. 5: "And he that sat thereon said, Behold, I make all things new," intimating the wonderful display which there is of the sovereign power and grace of God in the renovation or new creation of a dead and self-destroyed sinner. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," &c.

Walker, with some slight alteration, on 2 Chron. v. 13, 14: "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound," &c.

The dedication of Solomon's temple was a period as memorable in the history of the Old Testament church as the day of Pentecost in that of the New. On the pentecostal day was exhibited one of the most striking displays of divine grace with which the Christian church has ever been favoured, when the Holy Ghost made a visible descent upon the apostles of our Lord, and imparted those miraculous gifts by which they were qualified to publish to all nations the glad tidings of divine mercy. The manifestation of divine grace recorded in our text is almost equally striking, and was certainly the brightest ever experienced under the Jewish dispensation. It is impossible to conceive the joy, the wonder, the ecstasy of these devout worshippers, when they beheld the cloud, that well-known symbol of the divine presence, and saw the temple filled with his glory. Solomon himself, as we learn from the eighteenth verse of the following chapter, was so overpowered with this extraordinary manifestation that he made a sudden pause, even after he had begun to pray; and, like one doubtful whether he should believe the testimony of his own senses, abruptly asked the question: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?"

It appears, from the last chapter of the book of Exodus, that, when the tabernacle was first erected in the wilderness, God was pleased to take visible possession of it in a way similar to what is here recorded; and the effects (though not precisely the same) were very much akin to those I have now read to you; for we are there told that Moses, the man of God, was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord had filled the tabernacle; but here the cloud not only filled the tabernacle, but the whole temple, and the divine presence was displayed with such glory and majesty that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar were obliged, at least for some time, to intermit the service. They could

not stand to minister by reason of the cloud ; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

It will seen that each of the two paragraphs, in the foregoing example, affords a separate illustration of the use of our Topic, the former comparing the display of divine grace recorded in the text with the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the latter comparing the principal facts recorded in the text with similar ones which are stated respecting the erection of the tabernacle. The following example is somewhat less direct, but still the principal thoughts appear to have been suggested by the Topic :

The same author on 2 Cor. iv. 5 : " We preach not ourselves," &c.

When God descended upon Mount Sinai to give laws to his people Israel, the awful tokens of his presence—the thunderings and lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the smoking of the mountain—struck the whole camp with such consternation and dread that they were constrained to remove and stand afar off. They could not bear the exceeding lustre of his glory, notwithstanding the thick darkness with which it was veiled, and therefore addressed Moses in these remarkable words : " Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." From this authentic piece of sacred history we may justly conclude that our nature is too weak in its present state to sustain an immediate intercourse with the Deity, for which cause God, in great condescension, is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves, that, on the one hand, we may not want the benefit of his instruction, and, on the other hand, that we may not be overpowered by the too dazzling splendour and majesty of the teacher.

Under the old dispensation, besides the stated ministers of religion, God, " at sundry times," sent extraordinary messengers on special errands to the Jewish church, furnishing them with such credentials of their mission as were sufficient to convince that highly-favoured people that they came from God, and consequently that in every thing relative to their particular message, so attested, they were bound to hearken to them as unto God himself. For this under the gospel we have no warrant to look. But our Lord Jesus Christ, the great " apostle and high priest of our profession," has instituted the ordinance of a gospel ministry and committed to men the word of reconciliation, charging them to proclaim in the ears of their brethren " all the words of this life," which are already delivered in writing to the church, with a special promise that in the faithful discharge of this important trust " he will be with them always, even unto the end of the world."

The sermon to which this was prefixed was preached at the introduction of a minister to a charge, and surely nothing could be more appropriate to the purpose.

XVII. DIFFERENCES ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS.

Walker has an exordium formed as completely upon this Topic as though it were intended for the purpose of illustrating it, at the same time that it forms a most appropriate introduction to his discourse, which is founded on Hosea xiv. 8 : " Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ?"

If we compare the representation here given of Ephraim with the account we have of him in chap. iv. 17, we shall discover such a wonderful change as must excite in us a desire to be acquainted with the cause of it. There it is said, " Ephraim is joined to his idols ;" here we behold him throwing them away with every symptom of contempt and abhorrence. Like a man awakened from a dream, or rather like one who had lost his reason, and was now restored to the right use of it, he says, " What have I to do any more with idols ?" It is my disgrace no less than my crime that ever I had any thing to do with such lying vanities ; but now I cast them from me with scorn and detestation, and with a determined purpose that I will never return to them any more.

How is this surprising change to be accounted for ? When God said, " Ephraim is joined to idols," he immediately pronounced that awful decree, " Let him alone !" Hereby a restraint was laid upon every outward instrument. All the creatures were charged by the highest authority to give him no disturbance in the course of his idolatry.

try, but to leave him entirely to his own conduct and the unabated influence of the idols he had chosen. By what means then was his recovery brought about? Had Ephraim the honour to discover the delusion by his own sagacity and to break the enchantment by his own strength? We find an answer to these questions in chap. xiii. 9: "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but *in me* is thy help." Had God said, I am determined to let Israel alone, there would have been an end of him at once, though the whole creation had been left at liberty to exert its utmost activity for his help; but it deserves our notice that, though God laid a restraint upon the agency of the creatures, yet he laid no restraint upon his own, but reserved to himself the full exercise of his essential unalienable prerogative, to be the free and sovereign dispenser of his grace.

XVIII. CONTRAST.

Blair on James iii. 17: "The wisdom that is from above is—gentle."

To be wise in our own eyes, to be wise in the opinion of the world, and to be wise in the sight of God, are three things so very different as rarely to coincide. One may often be wise in his own eyes who is far from being so in the judgment of the world; and to be reputed a prudent man by the world is no security for being accounted wise by God. As there is a worldly happiness which God perceives to be no other than disguised misery, as there are worldly honours which in his estimation are reproach, so there is a worldly wisdom which in his sight is foolishness. Of this worldly wisdom the characters are given in the context, and placed in contrast with those of the wisdom which is from above. The one is the wisdom of the crafty, the other that of the upright; the one terminates in selfishness, the other in charity: the one is full of strife and bitter envyings, the other of mercy and of good fruits.

One of the chief characters by which the wisdom from above is distinguished is *gentleness*, of which I am now to discourse. Of this there is the greater occasion to discourse, because it is too seldom viewed in a religious light, and is more readily considered by the bulk of men as a mere felicity of nature, or an exterior accomplishment of manners, than as a Christian virtue which they are bound to cultivate. I shall first explain the nature of this virtue, and shall then offer some arguments to recommend, and some directions to facilitate the practice of it.

The same author, when about to discourse on the subject of *Idleness*, avails himself of this Topic in his exordium by some very appropriate remarks on *Industry*. Matt. xx. 6: "Why stand you here all the day idle?"

It is an observation which naturally occurs, and has been often made, that all the representations of the Christian life in scripture are taken from active scenes, from carrying on a warfare, running a race, striving to enter in at a strait gate, and, as in this context, labouring in a vineyard. Hence the conclusion plainly follows that various active duties are required of the Christian, and that sloth and indolence are inconsistent with his hope of heaven. But it has been sometimes supposed that industry, as far as it is matter of duty, regards our spiritual concerns and employments only, and that one might be very busy as a Christian who was very idle as a man. The gospel, however, represents the religion of Christ as intended for the benefit of human society. It considers men as engaged in the business of active life, and directs its exhortations, accordingly, to all ranks and stations, to the magistrate and the subject, to the master and the servant, to the rich and the poor, to those that buy and those that sell, those that use and those that abuse the world.

This world, as the context represents it, is God's vineyard, where each of us has a task assigned him to perform. In every station, and at every period of life, labour is required. At the third, the sixth, or the eleventh hour, we are commanded to work, if we would not incur, from the great Lord of the vineyard, this reproof, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" We may, I confess, be busy about many things and yet be found negligent of the "one thing needful." We may be very active, and, withal, very ill employed. But, though a person may be industrious without being religious, I must at the same time admonish you that no man can be idle without being sinful. In the sequel of this discourse I shall endeavour to show that the idle man is, in every view, both foolish and criminal, that he neither lives to God, nor lives to the world, nor lives to himself.

Walker on Luke xviii. 14: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," commences with this Topic, but passes at once to the discussion.

As man fell by pride, it is reasonable to conclude that he can rise again only by humility; and here we are taught that this is the express ordination and appointment of Christ, for thus saith the faithful and true witness, "Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted." I therefore intend to open to you the true nature of Christian humility.

South on Job viii. 13: "The hypocrite's hope shall perish."

There is nothing in the world, though ever so excellent, but it has its counterfeit; religion, and grace itself, are not exempted, so that in these matters, as well as in others, we often suffer a fallacy in our choice, by embracing resemblances instead of things. *Sincerity* and *hypocrisy* are the two great things about which the whole stress and business of the gospel is laid out; namely, to persuade and enforce the one, and to discover and detect the other. And here we have hypocrisy presented in its greatest and most flourishing enjoyment, which is *hope*, and in its greatest misery, which is utter *frustration*.

As a further variety, in the application of this important Topic, I add an exordium of W. Draper's, on Matt. v. 4: "Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

How different this from the language of the world! Captivated by the short-lived mirth which the prophet compares with the crackling of thorns under a pot, they are ready to exclaim, Happy are the gay and cheerful! Eager in the pursuit of whatever elates the heart and delights the senses, they turn with disgust from the appearance of solemnity and gloom, and often look upon serious thought as the forerunner of melancholy, and melancholy as the completion of misery. But in the nature of things, and in the estimation of the wise, "the house of mourning (for a pilgrim in this world) is better than the house of feasting."

An example occurs in Cooke's Select Remains, which is so excellent that I shall quote it at some length, although the contrast is not pursued throughout. The subject is, DYING DAILY, founded on 1 Cor. xv. 31:

Nothing is more evident than that the generality of mortals care not how they *live*, which is an awful proof that they cannot bear to think that they shall *die*. Nay, to suggest an idea of death is sufficient to incur the name of *saint* in derision, or of a melancholy fool. Notwithstanding this, "there is a time to be *born* and a time to *die*;" and a single moment beyond this fixed time "cannot pass." "Behold (said God to his servant Moses), the day has come that thou must die!" From the sentence of God, and the daily execution of it, I am constrained to say to myself, "Behold, the days come (are always coming) that thou must die! And how do I know what that day will be? The day is as uncertain with me as it is certain with God. What can I do in this solemn uncertainty? Surely, as I know not which day, my interest is to be ready every day. This was the conduct of one of the wisest and best of men, the apostle Paul. Some might wonder at his mysterious conduct, voluntary suffering for the truth's sake, and might be ready to suggest, "You will expose yourself to sufferings till they will be your death?" "What then? Death is no formidable object to me," saith he; "No! I protest, by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily!" Think not that I fear to expose myself to sufferings and death for Christ's sake; for I assure you the cause I am engaged in is so noble, the Lord, whose I am and whom I serve, is so dear to me, and death is so familiar and interesting in its consequences to me, that "I die daily." Whatever I think to do in a dying hour, that I wish to do every day. I put myself in dying circumstances, and realize my departure, and try, daily try, to learn to die. That is, I daily

I. Deposit my soul in Christ's hands.

II. Attempt to resign all the interests of earth.

III. Cultivate a superior regard to another world.

IV. Realize death as a means of attaining the utmost of my wishes.

V. Regard the state and frame of the soul.

XIX. GROUNDS.

This is a Topic which is available in exordiums in several forms, as the following examples, presenting four distinct varieties, will sufficiently illustrate:—

Jay takes up the grounds of the text itself in his Morning Exercises. 1 Kings xix. 13: "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

The grounds of this question did not lie in ignorance. God well knew how and why he came there. But he would know from Elijah himself, and therefore asks him, that being called upon to account for his conduct, he might be convinced, and be either speechless or condemned out of his own mouth.

This opens to a beautiful division, in which the language of the text is considered in different views,

- I. As an instance of God's moral observation of his creatures.
- II. As a reproof given to a good man.
- III. As a rule by which we may judge of ourselves.

Walker employs the Topic in a more general way, in reference to the grounds of the Christian's faith. Rom. v. 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

The grounds of a Christian's faith and hope are not only sufficient to satisfy his own mind, but capable likewise of being described and vindicated in such a manner as cannot fail to give full satisfaction to every sober, unprejudiced enquirer. Genuine Christianity is far from declining any means of trial whereby truth is distinguished from delusion or imposture. On the contrary, it courts the light; and, the more severely it is tried, the brighter it shines. The evidence by which our faith and hope are supported has already stood the tests of many generations; and the most violent attacks of its enemies, instead of shaking the foundation, have only served to show that it is laid by that same almighty hand which created and upholds these heavens and this earth. The intelligent believer stands upon firm ground, and is always "ready to give an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the hope that is in him." Do you enquire into the *object* of his hopes, he will tell you, without hesitation, that he looks for a portion after death, in comparison whereof this earth is less than nothing and vanity. Do you enquire into the *grounds* of his hope, he has an answer ready in the words of my text, &c.

A different use is made of the Topic by the same author on 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

The just conception and faithful discharge of the reciprocal duties in society are the foundation (or grounds) both of private and public happiness. In this respect the church of Christ is not different from other communities among men. Although Christians acknowledge but one supreme Master, yet they are taught to acknowledge among themselves subordinate degrees of authority on the one hand and of submission and respect on the other. The God whom we serve is a God of order, not a God of confusion; and he has pointed out, both in his word and in his providence, the necessity of doing all things decently and in good order.

The text leads me to speak of the mutual regards and duties which ought to subsist between a minister of Christ and the people committed to his charge, in doing which I shall, through the divine assistance,

- I. Explain the account given us in the text of the nature of our office as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- II. Point out the corresponding obligations incumbent on Christians, with regard to those who are entrusted with this ministry.

Simeon takes up the grounds of that opposition to the gospel to which his text and the connexion referred. Rom. vi. 1—4: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin," &c.

We are told that the gospel was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness; whilst to all who had an experience of it in their souls it was both the power of God and the wisdom of God. The grounds on which the Jews and Greeks so greatly inveighed against it were various. Its apparent contrariety to the revelation given by Moses rendered it offensive to the one; and its proposing to us a Saviour who

appeared unable to save himself rendered it contemptible to the other. But there was one ground of offence which exposed it equally to the reprobation of all, and that was the unfavourable aspect which it had in relation to holiness. Men of every religion were ready to cry out against it in this view; and therefore the apostle, having stated the plan of the gospel salvation with all possible clearness, takes up this objection, and gives an answer to it—such an answer, indeed, as neither Jews nor Gentiles could have anticipated, but such as must approve itself to all whom God enables to comprehend it.

From the words of my text, I will take occasion to show,

- I. The supposed tendency of the gospel to encourage sin.
- II. The security it gives for the practice of universal holiness.

XX. THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

There are several passages of scripture in discoursing upon which an exordium formed on this Topic would be peculiarly suitable. It has, however, been generally overlooked by authors; and, as I cannot find an appropriate example, I must endeavour to make one, which, in addition to what I have said in Lecture XX., will, I hope, be sufficient to induce you to employ it when it may furnish any suitable and profitable remarks.

Take Matt. xxvi. 35: "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

These words exhibit the apostle Peter under a highly interesting and instructive aspect. What Christian mind can contemplate the feelings here indicated without perceiving much to admire and at the same time something to lament? Do we not here see a faithful and vivid representation of the youthful disciple of Christ, who, like the inexperienced but ardent adventurer in worldly business, frequently displays a zeal and an activity highly commendable, but fails through a similar rashness to that which is so often fatal to successful enterprise? Peter was no doubt sincere and ardent, but, little acquainted with the deceitfulness of his own heart, his confidence was presumptuous and delusive, and in the hour of temptation he became an easy prey. Our Lord, "in whom dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," saw with approbation the zeal of Peter, while he warned him of the consequences of his *temerity*. But, unawakened to a sense of his weakness, even by the solemn assurance of Christ, he persisted in declaring that though death itself should be the consequence he would never deny his Lord, &c.

XXI. SUPPOSITION.

Authors and preachers of a lively imagination very frequently resort to this and a few other Topics of an inventive character. The following examples will however be sufficient to give a just idea of the use of this Topic in exordiums:—

R. Robinson furnishes a very striking example.

Before I read my text, give me leave to open my heart to you. As I was coming hither this evening, and meditating on my text, I thought, *Suppose*—instead of going alone into the assembly this evening, as I shall—suppose it were possible for me to have the honour of leading by the hand through this numerous congregation, up to the place of speaking, the Lord Jesus Christ in his own person, "the firstborn of every creature, the image of the invisible God." Suppose I should then open the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, and, with a clear and distinct voice, summon each of my hearers to give an answer to the questions in the forty-second verse—"What think you of Christ? whose son is he?"

Affection for you set me a-thinking, further, on such answers as the most strict attention to truth would compel you to give. I thought, Suppose one should say, "I have never thought about Christ; I never intend to think about him." Suppose a second should say, "I have never thought of him, and I despise him, because he is not a minister of sin." And suppose a third should say, "I hate him; and, as it is not in my power to persecute him, I express my hatred of him by ridiculing and tormenting all who respect and resemble him."

My brethren, it is not for me to pretend to know your hearts, or to pronounce any thing certain; but the bare apprehension of such dispositions excited in me, as it must in every one that loves his neighbour as himself, a thousand suspicions and fears.

Dreading such answers as these, I thought again, What if I should bend my knee to the insulted Friend of sinners, and humbly ask, "O Son of David! what think you of this people? whose children are they?" Alas! I thought I saw him "look round about on you with anger, being grieved for the hardness of your hearts;" then turning about, melting with compassion, going down the steps, walking slowly out of the assembly, and all the way weeping and saying, "O that thou hadst known, even thou," the most inveterate of this congregation, "at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hidden from thine eyes."

Lavington, on Heb. xiii. 17: "For they watch for your souls."

The very mention of a future judgment excites attention. Should the heavens open, and the transactions of that day immediately commence, the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, attended by thousands of angels and ten thousand of his saints,—were the throne erected, and the Judge in awful majesty seated thereon,—should our names be among the first that are called upon to give an account of our stewardship,—and, among other things, should the improvement of the present opportunity be particularly enquired into (as it certainly will), what account would you wish to give of it? Under these impressions I now claim your attention, &c.

The same author, somewhat altered. Prov. xxiii. 26: "My son, give me thine heart."

I have been endeavouring to imagine what were the first thoughts that occurred to you upon the mention of this text. Some thought one thing and some another, no doubt. Shall I hazard a conjecture upon this matter? Why, then, I believe that some, when the text was first read, thought, "This is a very suitable text for the occasion, never considering that the text is a direct address that they should surrender their hearts. Others, perhaps, when they heard God say, "My son, give me thy heart," thought, "No, I cannot; my heart is engaged already. I cannot be religious, not I. What! give up all my merry companions, and be always reading, and hearing, and praying? Whatever I may do when I become old, I can by no means surrender at present." Others may say, "O that God had my poor heart—I do wish it; but such is the conflict within that nothing but an increase of divine grace can enable me to surrender it." But some, I have no doubt, are saying or crying out, with admiration and gratitude, "*My heart!—my heart!* wilt thou vouchsafe to accept *my* heart? Here it is; take it; if I had ten thousand hearts thou shouldst have them all."

The same author, 2 Pet. iii. 18: "But grow in grace."

Suppose I could lead you to the rich mines of Mexico or Potosi, and show you the heaps of gold and silver which they afford. If I could tell you that you might take what you would, do you suppose that you should be content with looking at those heaps and admiring them, and, after all, bringing nothing away? No, you would carry away as much as you could, and envy your stronger neighbours who brought home more than yourselves. Yet I come, sabbath after sabbath, and set before you the treasures of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and offer any of them, all of them, to you, without money or price; the smallest of these spiritual benefits is of more real value than a house full of silver and gold; but I bring them out and carry them home again and again, and that to no purpose. Do you think the charge too severe? Tell me, and make me happy, tell me that I am deceived, and that you not only have grace, but that you are sincerely desirous of growing in grace, of being filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Beveridge, Matt. xviii. 20: "Where two or three are gathered together," &c.

If our blessed Saviour were upon earth now, what flocking would there be from all parts to hear him and see him. And, if he were but in any part of the kingdom, how remote soever, which of us but would strive to go to him? what haste we should make, what pains we should take to get as near him as possible, to hear some of his divine discourses from his own mouth! with what reverence should we approach him! how attentively should we listen! But how rejoiced if we saw him smiling upon us,

owning us for his servants and disciples ! Should we not say, "It is good for us to be here?"

This may be thought a vain supposition, and so it is as to his bodily presence ; but yet there is a way whereby we may meet with our blessed Saviour every day in the year, and enjoy his presence as effectually as if he now dwelt among us. Witness Matt. xxviii. 20 : "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world ;" and the words of our text, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," &c.

Now these are very striking passages, it must be acknowledged ; but let it be noted that striking commencements must not be followed by dull discourses. These things can be attempted only when the mind is in a lively frame, capable of supporting such a beginning.

I add one example of a more simple character from the Preacher, vol. v., Ps. lxxiii. 24 : "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

Suppose a traveller had lost his way, and some kind friend had found him amidst dangers and set him right, he would be anxious for his assistance and direction during the remainder of his journey. The writer of this psalm had sadly erred, and gone out of his way. The counsel of God had been the means of bringing him back and setting him right ; he therefore now resolves to give himself up to it all the future part of his life, in the fullest confidence that it would lead him aright, and land him safely at last.

XXII. OBJECTIONS.

The exordium of a discourse will very frequently be the proper place for the introduction of this Topic when it requires to be noticed ; but I would again caution the student against employing it merely as a Topic for declamation. The following examples are worthy of imitation :—

Sherlock, Acts x. 34, 35 : "God is no respecter of persons."

These words, if not carefully attended to, may seem to carry a sense contrary to the meaning of the apostle in delivering them. St. Peter in the text declares that God, without respect to any national or personal privileges, was ready to admit all people into the covenant made with Jesus Christ, provided they were duly prepared for such admission. Some from his words have falsely concluded that there is no necessity of becoming disciples of Christ, but that it is sufficient if we live according to the principles and light of nature ; forasmuch as every one that feareth God, &c., is accepted of him.

Mr. Simeon, in an indirect but very efficient manner, guards against the objections which are made to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and thus prepares his hearers to enter with greater candour into his subject, which is founded on Mark xvi. 15, 16 : "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c.

It is to be lamented that an unhappy prejudice subsists in the Christian world against the peculiar and most essential doctrines of our holy religion, and that while ministers defend, with zeal and ability, the outworks of Christianity, they are at little pains to lead their hearers within the veil, and to unfold to them those blessed truths whereupon their salvation depends. Under the idea that moral discourses are more accommodated to the comprehensions of men, and more influential on their practice, they waive all mention of the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and inculcate little more than a system of heathen ethics. They would be ashamed and almost afraid to make such a passage as this the ground-work of their discourse, lest they should be thought to be contending for some unimportant tenets instead of promoting piety and virtue. But can any one read such a solemn declaration as that of the text and account it unworthy of his notice ? Can any one consider the circumstances under which it was uttered, or the authoritative manner in which the apostles were commanded to publish it to the whole world, and yet think himself at liberty to disregard it ? Shall it be suspected to be only the *shibboleth* of a party ? Let us put away such unbecoming jealousies, and enter in a fair and candid manner into the investigation of the words

before us ; let us consider that they were among the last words of our Lord while sojourning on earth, that they contain his final commission to his apostles and in them to all succeeding pastors of his church ; that they are distinguished by our Lord himself by the honourable appellation "the gospel," or glad tidings, and that they were delivered by him, not only as the rule of our faith, but as the rule of procedure in the day of judgment. Let us, I say, consider the words in this view, and with hearts duly impressed attend, while we explain the import, vindicate the reasonableness, and display the excellency, of this divine message.

The same author, Mark ii. 17 : "The whole need not a physician," &c.

There is no action, however benevolent, which cavillers may not censure. Every part of our Lord's conduct was worthy of his divine character, yet he constantly endured the contradiction of sinners, &c. He was now conversing familiarly with publicans for their good. This was condemned by the scribes as unbecoming a holy person, if not also giving countenance to sin. Our Lord vindicated himself on principles which they could not but acknowledge to be correct, &c.

The same author, 1 Tim. iii. 16 : "Great is the mystery of godliness," &c.

It has been often said by infidels that "where mystery begins religion ends." But if this were true, there would be no uniformity or consistency in the works of God. All his works, both of creation and providence, are full of mysteries ; there is not any one substance of which we know *all* its properties, nor any one event for which we can assign *all* the reasons. If there were nothing in religion above the comprehension of man, it would afford a strong presumption that our religion was not from heaven ; for why should it be revealed if man could have devised it without a revelation ? But the inspired writers represent the gospel as "the wisdom of God in a mystery," as a "mystery hidden from ages" and "kept secret from the foundation of the world." They speak of many of its fundamental doctrines as a mystery—"a great mystery"—a glorious mystery, and of its ministers as the "stewards of the mysteries of God." In the words before us many of the principal events relating to Christ and the establishment of his religion in the world are enumerated, and confessedly declared to involve a great mystery. Let us then contemplate them in their order, &c.

The same author, Luke xxii. 22 : "Truly the Son of Man goeth as it is written," &c.

The doctrine of predestination is very mysterious. If it be so held as to destroy the free agency of man, it must be pernicious and false. But it cannot be denied without denying the omniscience and immutability of God. Nor, if properly understood, is it at all inconsistent with the responsibility of man. If we know not how to reconcile all its difficulties, it is not *therefore* false. Certain it is that Judas was removed to his own place ; nor can we doubt but the Judge of all the earth will do right ; yet his sin was among the things which had been foreordained. So also was the death of Christ, and every particular respecting it.

These are excellent commencements, and on some occasions very proper. They were peculiarly proper in Mr. Simeon, who stood high in one of our universities, where the mysteries of the gospel were not favourite Topics.

I add a specimen of a still more general kind from Farquhar on 1 Thess. v. 16 : "Rejoice evermore."

Many ill-disposed persons consider religion as the cause of a severe, gloomy, and unsocial disposition ; and some of the friends of religion do not quite escape this observation. Nothing, however, can be more unjust than such a judgment, or productive of worse effects.

XXIII. CONSIDER CHARACTERS OF MAJESTY, ETC.

In other words, see if there be any thing worthy of remark in any *quality* of the text or subject which will not require a place in the discussion.

Instances of the use of this Topic in exordiums might be adduced to an almost unlimited extent, but I must here confine myself to the exemplification of a few only of its numerous varieties.

Mr. Simeon seems to have had this Topic in view when composing the exordium of his discourse on John i. 1 : "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

What astonishing majesty and dignity are displayed in these brief but comprehensive words ! The other evangelists commence their histories at the period of our Saviour's incarnation ; but John carries us back to eternity itself, and informs us, not only what Christ did and suffered, but who he was. He calls him by a very peculiar name—"The Word ;" and, in other places, "The Word of Life," "The Word of God." This name, as applicable to the Messiah, was not altogether unknown to the Jews ; and it seems peculiarly proper to the Son because it is by the Son that God has in all ages revealed his mind to man. And perhaps this very explanation of the term is intended to be conveyed to us by John when he says, within a few verses after my text, "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Mr. J. Hill furnishes an excellent example on Heb. xii. 23 : "And to God the Judge of all."

These words at first reading strike terror. It is an awful thing for a sinful creature to appear before God the Judge of all ; but in Christ Jesus this God is a reconciled God, and so is the justifier of all those that believe. Thus considered, they speak comfort. With this view our apostle mentions them in the text, as bearing a large share in those special privileges unto which the saints under the New Testament are admitted ; and with this view I have read them for the subject of your present meditations.

The two foregoing examples mark the character of *majesty*, as exhibited in their respective texts ; the two following are on the *necessity* of the course required in the text, which is a far more common and certainly not less important consideration.

Simeon, on Luke xii. 47, 48 : "That servant who knew his lord's will," &c.

If there be much spoken in scripture concerning the necessity of faith in Christ, so is there much spoken, also, concerning the necessity of obedience to him. The two are never to be separated ; they are indissolubly connected together in God's purpose, and must be also in our attainments : they are the root and the fruit, or the foundation and the superstructure. The necessity of good works is marked with peculiar force in the words before us, wherein our Lord makes known to us,

I. The ground and measure of our responsibility to God.

II. The rule of God's procedure towards us in the day of judgment.

The same author, on John viii. 24 : "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins."

The necessity of faith in Christ in order to salvation is not to be considered as a merely arbitrary appointment : it arises out of the very state into which mankind are fallen, a state in which it would be impossible for them to enjoy God, even if they were admitted into his immediate presence. They are at present laden and defiled with sin, and could derive no comfort from the sight of a holy God. Their iniquities would for ever render them odious in his eyes and him terrible in theirs. They must be cleansed from their sins before they can hold any communion with him as a father and a friend. But they can never wash away their own sins, nor find any other means of expiation besides that which God has ordained, even the blood of his only dear Son. Nor is there any way in which they can be interested in Christ, but by believing in him.

The *importance* of any subject will also sometimes furnish an exordium well calculated, under the divine blessing, to secure that attention from your hearers which the subject may demand. That such a preparation is necessary I need not attempt to prove ; for, though men will readily acknowledge that the subjects which, as ministers of Christ, it is your duty to bring before them possess claims on their attention with which no other class of subjects is invested, yet it is but too evident that these *acknowledged*

claims are very generally disregarded, and those subjects which are the most important are likewise the most neglected. The following examples are well worthy of your attention.

Blair on Prov. iv. 23 : "Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life."

Among the many wise counsels given by this inspired writer, there is none which deserves greater regard than that contained in the text. Its importance, however, is too seldom perceived by the generality of men. They are apt to consider the regulation of external conduct as the chief object of religion. If they can act their part with decency, and maintain a fair character, they conceive their duty to be fulfilled. What passes in the meantime within their mind they suppose to be of no great consequence either to themselves or to the world. In opposition to this dangerous plan of morality, the wise man exhorts us to "keep the heart" (that is, to attend, not only to our actions, but to our thoughts and desires), and to "keep the heart with all diligence" (that is, with sedulous and unremitting care), for which he assigns this reason, that "out of the heart are the issues of life."

The same author, 1 Cor. vii. 31 : "The fashion of this world passeth away."

To use this world so as not to abuse it is one of the most important and at the same time one of the most difficult lessons which religion teaches us. By so many desires and passions are we connected with the objects around us, that our attachment to them is always in hazard of becoming excessive and sinful. Hence religion is so often employed in moderating this attachment, by rectifying our erroneous opinions, and instructing us in the proper value we ought to set on worldly things. Such was the particular scope of the apostle in this context.

Simeon on Rom. viii. 13 : "If you live after the flesh, you shall die," &c.

It is of infinite importance to know our state as it is before God, and to ascertain on scriptural grounds what our condition will be in the eternal world. Numberless are the passages of God's word which will afford us the desired information. But there is not in the whole inspired volume one declaration more explicit than that before us. It presents to our view two momentous truths, which, as they admit not of any clearer division or arrangement, we shall consider in their order.

These are very clear examples in their kind. They are somewhat short, but it remains with the good sense of the preacher to fix the proper length. Where he apprehends the people want stirring up to the subject—as the importance of a just observance of the sabbath where it is scandalously disregarded—this point must be enlarged on ; in other cases much enlargement may not be required.

The *utility* of any subject, or the advantages arising from the course recommended, may also be noticed in an exordium.

Blair on Ps. xv. 5 : "He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

Tranquillity of mind, or, in the words of the text, a mind not moved or disquieted by the accidents of life, is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings that we can possess on earth. It is indeed the ultimate aim to which the wishes of the wise and reflecting have ever been directed, that, with a mind undisturbed by anxieties, cares, and fears, they might pass their days in a pleasing serenity. They justly concluded that, by enjoying themselves in peace, they would enjoy, to the greatest advantage, all the comforts of life that came within their reach. This happy tranquillity the multitude conceive to be most readily attainable by means of wealth, which they imagine would set them above all the ordinary disturbances of life. That it has some effect for this purpose cannot be denied. At the same time I must observe that the attainment of opulence is no certain method of obtaining tranquillity. Nay, the higher men rise in the world, the greater degrees of power and distinction they acquire, the further they are often removed from internal peace.

Assuming it, therefore, for an undoubted truth that the mere possession of the goods of fortune may be consistent with the want of inward tranquillity, we must look

around for other more certain grounds of it. We must enquire whether any line of conduct can be pointed out which, independent of external situations in the world, shall tend to make us easy in mind, shall either bestow or aid that tranquillity which all men desire.

XXIV. DEGREES.

This Topic may occasionally be used as an exordium in something like the following manner :—

“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” 2 Tim. ii. 1.

It is possible to have the grace of Christ, and not to be strong in it. The reality is one thing; the degree is another. We read of weak faith as well as of strong faith. There are lambs in our Shepherd's fold, as well as sheep; and in our Father's house there are little children as well as young men. But, while there is in religion an infancy that is natural and lovely, there is another which is unlooked for and offensive. It is the effect of relapse. It is not of the beginning of the divine life, but of an after period, that the apostle speaks when, reproving the Hebrews, he says, “You have *become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” The Saviour himself does “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;” but he is concerned to “bring forth judgment unto victory,” and, while they are to be comforted, the slothful are to be stimulated, and all are to be kept from settling upon their lees.

XXV. DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

Some discourses might certainly commence with great propriety by remarks on the manner in which the subject bears on the interests of individuals or communities; but I have not discovered any good example of this kind, and, as the Topic is sufficiently illustrated in Lecture XXVIII., I shall not attempt to offer any example of my own, but commend the *unbeaten* path (so far as exordiums are concerned) to the student, merely adding that the historical parts of scripture afford many suitable openings, as the sacrifice of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 36, &c., in which the different interests of Baal and his worshippers, and of God and his servants, were concerned. For the different interests which men *feel* in any subjects, I must refer you to the examples given under the twenty-first Topic.

XXVI. DISTINGUISH, DEFINE, ETC.

For the first of these, take 1 John v. 13: “These things have I written unto you that believe, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

As the want of rightly distinguishing between the scripture doctrines of faith in Christ and assurance of personal interest in him has given rise to much needless and unprofitable discussion, and been the occasion of much mischief among the professors of the gospel, it is highly important that we should seek to possess clear and explicit ideas upon the subject. It is obvious that in the passage now before us the apostle distinguishes between “believing on the Son of God” and “knowing that we have eternal life.” Saving faith therefore does not consist in knowing or being assured of our interest in Christ, though it may be accompanied with such an assurance. The latter is the fruit or effect of faith, and should not be confounded with it. The apostle also makes a difference between our first trusting in Christ and our subsequent believing on his name. The former refers to the period of our conversion, when we first came to him for salvation; the latter to a life of communion with him and of dependence upon him.

XXVII. COMPARE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER.

This may sometimes suggest a very edifying exordium, as will be seen by the following examples, with which I must close my Lecture.

The Preacher, vol. vii., p. 145, on Prov. xi. 30: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise.”

The two parts of this text serve to explain each other. The former is general, and

denotes that a righteous man is a blessing to those about him. The latter is more particular, teaching us that a good man is in many instances the means of winning souls to God and to the love of true religion, and that where this is the case it is the sign of heavenly wisdom. The imagery of the text is probably taken from the tree of life in paradise, to which Christ himself is compared Rev. ii. 7; and in a subordinate sense his people are represented under the same figure. Two remarks will tend to illustrate and confirm the truth taught us in the text:

I. That good men in general are a blessing to those about them: their fruit is like that of "the tree of life."

II. They are in many cases instrumental in "winning souls" to God, and so prove themselves to be truly "wise."

Walker on 2 Cor. v. 1: "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

In the former part of this verse the apostle compares the body to an earthly house, yea, to a tabernacle or tent, which is still less durable and more easily taken down, and therefore the dissolution of such a frail thing ought not to be reckoned a very great calamity. In the latter clause he exhibits the glorious object of the Christian hope, which he calls "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." At the same time he expresses the firm persuasion which he had, in common with all true Christians, of being admitted into that glorious and permanent habitation as soon as the earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved: "We know." He does not say, We think, or, We hope so, but, We are assured of it; we are as firmly persuaded that this shall be our lot as if we had already entered upon the possession of it. In handling this important branch of the subject I propose, through divine aid,

I. To describe the persons for whom this blessing of God is prepared.

II. To enquire how, or by what means, they come to know that they shall certainly possess it.

Thus then we have seen that Claude's Topics (either intentionally or otherwise) have been made the ground-work of exordiums by preachers of distinguished eminence and ability; and it remains to be proved, by those who despise their aid, that a familiar acquaintance with these sources of reflection can render the Topics themselves less applicable and appropriate, or diminish the value of any composition into which they are introduced. In my next Lecture I shall bring before you a few more examples of exordiums which may serve to suggest a further variety, and shall then dismiss the subject.

LECTURE XXX.

EXTRA-TOPICAL EXORDIUMS.

WE come now to consider, as proposed, a few extra Topics which may furnish suitable remarks for exordiums. Some of these might have been included as subdivisions under Claude's Topics; but upon the whole, I imagine, they will not be thought unworthy of the distinct place I have allotted to them.

I. THE PROPRIETY OF AN EXPRESSION OR ACTION.

Take Ps. lxxiii. 28: "It is good for me to draw near to God."

The text is a broad, unqualified assertion, and it remains to be proved by a reference to the experience of the pious whether there be not something in religious services which can with *propriety* be denominated a *drawing near to God*, or whether the idea originates in enthusiasm, in a too bold intrusion into the divine presence, an unwarrantable familiarity, &c.

The following is on the propriety of the appeal contained in the text,

where it is shown that it is fit and right that we should attend to the requisition, &c.

Simeon on 1 Chron. xxix. 5: "Who then is willing to consecrate his service unto the Lord?"

That the God of heaven and earth possesses a claim to the services of his creatures is a truth which reason itself inculcates. The acknowledgment of this claim is even enforced upon us by the brute creation: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" much more then should we consider our obligation to him who has nourished us, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." But how are all divine claims magnified when we reflect on the inestimable blessings conveyed to us in the work of redemption! "What should we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Is it not our "reasonable service" that we should "present our bodies" and souls a living and holy sacrifice unto him who hath bought us with his blood? Such indeed is the blindness and obduracy of the heart that even the wonders of redemption prove too often ineffectual to excite in us a spirit of love and gratitude towards the Redeemer. Yet certainly the anxious enquiry of the true Christian is this, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and, under a lively impression of the unmerited goodness of God, he considers himself not as his own but the Lord's, and glorifies God with his body and spirit which are God's. But if the current of our affections do not move in this direction, if the habit of our lives be not governed by this principle, our real character is at variance with our name and profession.

Lavington, on Deut. xxxii. 29: "O that they were wise," &c. Here the exordium turns on the propriety of treating upon the subject of the text.

If when mankind quitted this world they were never to appear in another, there would be an evident impropriety in attempting to fix their minds on a subject so unwelcome as death; and, as we should feel no alarm or anxiety on account of the careless conduct of sinners, we might let them eat, drink, and be merry, and not disturb them with gloomy and groundless apprehensions of futurity. But we know that "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death there is a judgment;" and we are assured that "all who are in the grave, or in the sea, shall come forth, those that have done good to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." If therefore we are not connected by blood or friendship with those dying immortals, as I may call them, surely common humanity should engage us to warn all within our reach of the impending destruction; and where we could do no more we should sigh and say, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" &c.

II. THE OCCASION OF A WORD OR ACTION.

The Preacher, vol. v., on Ps. li. 15: "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

The force and beauty of many passages of scripture arise from the occasion on which they were delivered. Such language as that before us, if viewed out of its connexion, would appear to convey the idea only of a desire to enjoy freedom in prayer and praise. But, considered as a part of this penitential psalm, it implies much more, and acquires additional force and interest. It implies that sin had shut the mouth of the penitent, and he knew not how to open it; but that, if God would pardon his iniquity, that would open it, and then his lips should ever be employed in praise.

Blair on John xiii. 7: "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

These words of our Lord were occasioned by a circumstance in his behaviour which seemed mysterious to his disciples. When about to celebrate his last passover he meant to give them an instructive lesson of condescension and humility. The mode which he chose for delivering this instruction was the emblematical action of washing their feet. When Simon Peter saw his Master addressing himself to the performance of so menial an office, he exclaimed, with the greatest surprise, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Our Lord replied in the words of the text, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." As if he had said, "My behaviour, in this

instance, may seem unaccountable to you at present ; but you shall afterwards receive a satisfactory explanation of the intent of that symbol which I now employ."

The expressions of a Divine Person on this occasion can very naturally and properly be applied to various instances where the conduct of Providence, in the administration of human affairs, remains dark and mysterious to us. "What I do thou knowest not now." We must for a while be kept in ignorance of the designs of Heaven. But this ignorance, though necessary at present, is not always to continue. A time shall come when a commentary shall be afforded on all that is now obscure, when the veil of mystery shall be removed, and full satisfaction be given to every rational mind. "Thou shalt know hereafter." This is the doctrine which I purpose to illustrate in the following discourse.

Blair on John xvii. 1 : "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour has come," &c.

These were the words of our blessed Lord on a memorable occasion. The feast of the passover drew nigh, at which he knew that he was to suffer. The night had arrived wherein he was to be delivered into the hands of his enemies. He had spent the evening in conference with his disciples, like a dying father in the midst of his family, mingling consolations with his last instructions. When he had ended his discourse to them "he lifted up his eyes to heaven," and, with the words which I have now read, began that solemn prayer of intercession for the church which closed his ministry.

Jay on John xvii. 15 : "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world," &c.

These words were spoken by our Saviour on a very memorable occasion—an "hour" unparalleled in the annals of time. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." While he was with them he had withheld no proof of his kindness and care. He gave them free access to his presence, he removed their doubts, he relieved their complaints, he bore with their infirmities. Such an intercourse of sacred friendship had endeared him to their affections, and rendered the prospect of separation inexpressibly painful. When the venerable Samuel died "all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him." The case of the disciples was more peculiarly afflictive, and "sorrow filled their hearts." Our Saviour was never deprived of self-possession ; in every state he had the full command of his powers ; and, even in the immediate view of his tremendous sufferings, he does not forget one circumstance which claims his attention. He thinks more of his disciples than of himself ; he enters into their feelings. They were to remain behind, poor and despised, "as sheep among wolves," as passengers in a vessel "tossed by the waves." He will not leave them "comfortless." On the evening before his crucifixion, and a few moments before his agony, by the gate of the garden of Gethsemane, surrounded with his family, "he lifts up his eyes to heaven," and commends them into the hands of his "Father and our Father, his God and our God."

Many very excellent sermons are introduced by

III. A DIRECT COMMENT UPON THE TEXT.

Blair on Eccles. xii. 5 : "Man goeth to his long home," &c.

This is a sight which incessantly presents itself. Our eyes are so much accustomed to it that it hardly makes any impression. Throughout every season of the year, and during the course of almost every day, the funerals which pass along the streets show us man going to his long home. Were death a rare and uncommon object—were it only once in the course of a man's life that he beheld one of his fellow-creatures carried to the grave—a solemn awe would fill him ; he would stop short in the midst of his pleasures ; he would even be chilled with secret horror. Such impressions, however, would prove unsuitable to the nature of our present state, and it is better ordered by the wisdom of Providence that they should be weakened by the frequency of their recurrence. Yet, familiar as death has now become, it is undoubtedly fit that by an event of so important a nature some impression should be made upon our minds. It ought not to pass over as one of those common incidents which are beheld without concern, and awaken no reflection.

In discoursing from these words I am to consider death as one of the most frequent and considerable events that happen in the course of human affairs, and to show in what manner we ought to be affected, first, by the death of strangers or indifferent persons ; secondly, by the death of friends ; and, thirdly, by the death of enemies,

IV. A CRITICAL OR HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATION.

The Preacher, vol. ii., on John xx. 11, 12 : "And, as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre," &c.

Modern travellers who have visited Jerusalem describe the holy sepulchre, hewn out of a rock, as being small and low, not more than eight feet square, with a contracted entrance, and several steps descending into it, which accounts for the position which Mary occupied, "stooping down and looking in." Scarcely believing it possible that the tomb should be deserted, she pried with eager curiosity, as the day dawned upon the sacred spot. Let us,

I. Try to gather a little instruction from her example.

II. Consider the encouragement arising from her success.

V. THE LITERAL SENSE OF THE TEXT.

Blair on Psa. xvi. 11 : "Thou wilt show me the path of life," &c.

The apostle Peter, in a discourse which he delivered to the Jews, applied this passage in a mystical and prophetic sense to the Messiah, Acts. ii. 25—28. But, in its literal and primitive meaning, it expresses the exalted hopes by which the psalmist David supported himself amidst the changes and revolutions of which his life was full. By these hopes, when flying before Saul, when driven from his throne, and persecuted by an unnatural son, he was enabled to preserve his virtue, and to maintain unshaken trust in God. In that early age of the world those explicit discoveries of a state of immortality which we enjoy had not yet been given to mankind. But, though the sun of righteousness had not yet arisen, the dawn had appeared of that glorious day which he was to introduce. We shall consider,

I. The hope of the psalmist in his present state : "Thou wilt show me the path of life."

II. The termination of his hope in that future state where "in the presence of God is the fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The literal and primitive meaning ought always to be noticed in an exordium, when your discourse turns upon an accommodation of any passage to ideas which it was not intended by the writer to convey ; for here the passage of scripture is in fact neither a *proof* of the justness of the sentiments advanced, nor properly a foundation for them, any further than as affording an instructive resemblance, which requires the literal meaning to be clearly understood.

Simeon on Ezek. viii. 15 : "Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man ?" &c.

Man is ready to complain of God's judgments, as though they were unmerited or severe. But "God will be justified in his sayings, and will overcome when he is judged." The captives in Babylon thought that God had dealt hardly with them. God therefore gave to the prophet Ezekiel, who was among the captives there, a vision of what was at that very time transacting in the temple at Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments that had been inflicted on them. It was on account of their idolatries that God had given them over into the hands of the Chaldeans ; yet was idolatry practised at Jerusalem in all its most hateful and abominable forms, even by the priests and elders, who ought to have exerted their authority to repress it. They laboured, indeed, to conceal their impiety from common observation, and therefore they built a wall to obstruct the common entrance into the place where they assembled ; but the prophet, in his vision, "spied a hole in the wall," which he was directed to enlarge, so as to get access "to the door," and then, entering in at the door, "he saw every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, poured upon the wall round about," and seventy elders, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan at their head, offering clouds of incense to them. Being directed then to go to another part of the temple, he saw "still greater abominations," even a multitude of "women sitting, weeping for Tammuz," some deified monster of iniquity. Then, in the passage which I have read, he was told that, on going to another part of the temple, he should "see greater abominations still." Accordingly, he went into the inner court of the temple, and there saw "about five-and-twenty men, with their

back towards" that part of the temple where the holy of holies was, and which was the more immediate residence of the Deity, and worshipping "the sun towards the east." The Lord then appeals to the prophet, whether there was not abundant reason for the judgments which he had inflicted on the nation, and declares his determination to chastise them with yet greater severity.

In its primary sense this passage doubtless refers only to the Jews, and to them only at the period here specified. But when we consider that the deportation of the Jewish people into captivity, their subsequent deliverance from that captivity, and their restoration to their own land, were all typical of what yet passes in the world, and in the church, and in the heart, we feel authorized so far as to accommodate the words of our text to existing circumstances as to take occasion from them to point out the hidden abominations which may be discovered from a closer inspection of,

I. The world. II. The church. III. The heart.

Thus have I endeavoured to exemplify the chief sources of reflection. Let the student make himself familiarly acquainted with all these and he need never be at a loss for suitable remarks with which to commence his discourses; and, besides the diversity of Topics, the manner in which they are employed may be so varied that, even where the Topics are the same, they may preserve all the freshness of novelty.

For example, instead of making any Topic the matter of positive statement or assertion, it will sometimes have a better effect to introduce it as involving

AN ADMITTED TRUTH.

Simeon on Isa. v. 20 : "Woe to those who call evil good," &c.

That man in his present state is a corrupt and sinful creature is *too plain to be denied*. The whole tenour of his conduct proves it beyond a doubt. But the generality give themselves credit for meaning well at the very time that they are doing ill. In this, however, they are mistaken. There is in all a far greater consciousness of the evil of their conduct than they are willing to allow. But they wish to quiet their own minds and to approve themselves to the world, and therefore they change the name of things, calling "good evil and evil good, putting light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." By these means they succeed in allaying their own fears, and so recommend themselves to each other. But their guilt before God is hereby increased; for our Lord says, "*This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*" There is in their hearts a rooted aversion to what is good, and a consequent determination to decry it. There is also an inveterate love of evil and a consequent desire to justify it. Hence arises that conduct which is so justly reprobated in the text, &c.

The same author on Rom. ii. 17—23.

It is *generally acknowledged* that the heart of man is deceitful, but the extent of its deceitfulness is little known. It is not in things of minor importance only that its delusive operations are felt, but in things of everlasting concern, where it might be supposed we should be most on our guard against them. It deceives us by the strangest misrepresentations of things, and most effectually deceives itself, by keeping out of view what ought to be seen. It leads us to substitute a profession of religion for its reality, and to rest in its forms without the substance, which is the most preposterous thing imaginable. This species of self-deceit prevailed to an awful degree among the Jews, with whom St. Paul in the text expostulates.

This latter example is formed of the *leading ideas of a sermon* on Jer. xvii. 9, wanting nothing more than to amplify them, and to show the extreme state of wickedness that accompanies the deception itself, and, as an improvement, the necessity of conversion. As an exordium it is well adapted to Rom. ii. 17—23.

INTERROGATIVES.

Many exordiums commence in an *interrogative* form. Some examples of this kind have already been given under the Topics, and I add the following :—

Walker on 1 John v. 11 : “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

Why do not all to whom these good tidings are published receive them with humble gratitude and joy? Are they expressed in terms so dark and ambiguous that their meaning and import cannot be fully ascertained? or is the offer of life loaded with such hard conditions as exceed the powers of those to whom it is addressed? Were either of these the case, unbelief would be furnished with something more than a plausible excuse. But everybody must be sensible that neither of these objections can, with any colour of justice, be charged upon the record as it lies before us in my text. To what then shall we attribute the cold reception it meets with from the bulk of mankind, the contemptuous rejection of it by many, and the violent opposition that is made to it by not a few?

Blair, with some trifling alteration, on Prov. xix. 3 : “The foolishness of man perverteth his way,” &c.

Is it a new or uncommon thing to hear men complain of the misery and distress that fill the world? Do not the high and the low, the young and the aged, join in such complaints? Since the beginning of time what topic has been more fertile of declamation than the vanity and vexation which man is appointed to suffer? But are we certain that this vexation, and this vanity, are altogether to be ascribed to the appointment of heaven? Is there no ground to suspect that man himself is the chief and immediate author of his own sufferings? What the text plainly suggests is that it is common for men to complain *groundlessly* of Providence, that they are prone to accuse God for the evils of life when in reason they ought to accuse themselves, and that after their foolishness has perverted their way, and made them undergo the consequences of their own misconduct, they impiously fret in heart against the Lord. This is the doctrine which I now propose to illustrate, in order to silence the sceptic and to check a repining and irreligious spirit. I shall for this end make some observations, first on the external, and next upon the internal, condition of man; and then conclude with such serious and useful improvement as the subject will naturally suggest.

Some very striking and excellent exordiums commence with

EXCLAMATION.

Thus Jay on Rom. xi. 2—4 : “God hath not cast away,” &c.

How numerous, how various, how opposite to each other are the mistakes of mankind! The lives and the language of many seem to imply a full persuasion that there is very little evil in sin, that the difficulties of religion are by no means great, that it is an easy thing to be a Christian, that, if there be a hell, few are wicked enough to be turned into it, and that the generality of our fellow-creatures are in a fair way for heaven. This persuasion is as false as it is fatal. It is possible, however, to fall into another extreme, and to draw an unwarrantable conclusion respecting the state of religion and the number of its adherents; and even wise men and good men are liable to this. “Wot you not what the scripture saith of Elias?” &c.

Simeon on Eph. i. 4—7 : “But God who is rich in mercy,” &c.

What an accumulation of sublime ideas is here presented to our view! We scarcely know whether to admire more the grace of the benefactor or the felicity of those who participate in his blessings. But the text requires us to fix our attention on that most delightful of all subjects, the riches of divine grace, in its source, in its operation, and in its end.

Let the student, however, take care that in his notes of admiration he does not expose himself to ridicule by overstepping the bounds of moderation. For instance, the following example ought not to be imitated, and is certainly unworthy of its author :—

Simeon on Jer. ii. 31 : "O generation, see you the word of the Lord, Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" &c.

I am perfectly astonished! *I can scarcely believe my own eyes!* Who is it that thus addresses us and vindicates his own character against the accusations which, by our lives at least, we bring against him? It is no other than Jehovah himself, calling upon us to prove, if we can, that he merits at our hands the treatment he has received from us! Often does he call upon heaven and earth to judge between him and his people. But in the chapter before us he supposes himself to be charged with having acted unkindly, not to say injuriously, towards them: "Hear you the word of the Lord," &c.

The introductory ideas may also be clothed in

THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

A great number of Jay's sermons commence in this way, but a single example will suffice.

Jay's Sermons, on Heb. ii. 10: "It became him for whom," &c. The author commences as follows:—

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The words of this quotation, my brethren, contain a reflection always seasonable, always useful, always necessary, when we would regard the work of the Lord or the operation of his hand. It may be exemplified in numberless instances, but in none so easily and so fully as in the redemption of the world by means of a Mediator, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," &c.

QUOTATIONS FROM THEOLOGICAL WRITERS.

and occasionally from others, may be employed in a similar manner.

Take Rom. iv. 25: "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification."

"Our doctrine of justification," observes Luther, "is the pillar upon which the reformed religion rests;" and, agreeably with this observation, he strenuously maintained that they must stand or fall together. Certain it is that the subject of justification makes a very distinguished figure in that religion which is from above, and is a very capital article of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity, runs through Christian experience, and operates on every part of practical godliness. Such is its importance that a mistake about it has a fearful and malignant efficacy. Nor can this appear strange when it is considered that the doctrine of justification is no other than the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with all other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold while that is misunderstood. It is, if anything may be so called, an essential article, and certainly requires our most serious attention.

HISTORICAL FACTS

will occasionally answer the same end.

Rom. xiv. 12: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Plutarch relates that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the republic: to which he immediately replied, "Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all." This, brethren, is the notion of almost all wicked men, who, being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to their sovereign Lord. We may be assured that there can be no other way to take than to come before him now with the most ample, heartfelt acknowledgment of our offences, in the language of the returning prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight."

It has been recommended by Claude and others to be very sparing of such ancient references ; but I think the discretion of the preacher will, in general, be a sufficient guard against improprieties of this nature.

At other times a subject may be introduced by

A SUITABLE ANECDOTE.

Jay's Morning Exercises, vol. i., on Deut. xxxiii. 25 : "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Dr. Doddridge was one day walking much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. "But," says he, "passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead." So much is often done by a word unexpectedly and undesignedly spoken.

LECTURE XXXI.

PERORATIONS.

I now arrive at that part of sermonizing for which all the preceding parts are intended to prepare, and it is of immense consequence that this—like the termination of the voyage of life—should be satisfactory, whatever defects may have marked the progress. As I have hitherto followed the excellent general outline of Claude, so I shall preserve his *main idea* to the end, which here is to "make a powerful impression on the audience : " but I must beg leave to exchange the French style for the English, because I think the latter is, for Englishmen, the best. In general the French eloquence and the English have very distinct characteristics : the one seems to be addressed more directly to the passions ; the other is more plain and solid, yet powerfully appeals to the conscience and the understanding ; and we do not hesitate, as Englishmen, on which to fix our regards, or which example to follow. I fear not the result of any trial as to which will be most efficient in perorations. A transient effect on the passions might be produced by the eloquence of Bourdalouë, Bossuet, Massillon, or even Fénelon, in the court of Louis XIV. ; but the history of that era records no genuine conversions ; the monarch and the court continued as corrupt as ever ; they were alarmed or they wept for a moment, and the next turned to their follies again. The eloquence of the preacher was heard as the music of one who had a pleasant voice, or who could play well upon an instrument ; but no permanent impression was made. We observe similar emotions produced by very affecting narratives, magical novels, the tragic muse, nay, by music alone, without a syllable of sense. A whole audience of any kind may be animated, or may be made to weep, without being reformed. But when our system is properly pursued, when the appeal is made both to the understanding and the heart, we may reasonably expect that more permanent, though perhaps less powerful impressions will be produced.

Such is my apology for preferring English perorations ; and such as I shall adduce, will I think fully maintain our high character. That I may not, however, extend my observations to increase the bulk of my Lectures, already far exceeding my expectations, I shall only add a few practical remarks of a general nature, and leave this important branch of study, with the examples, to the wisdom and discretion of the student.

In the first place, let it be constantly borne in mind that, in order to

succeed well in the peroration, your whole discourse must be regularly preparatory to it, to secure which the eye of the preacher must be always upon this end, whatever text or plan of discussion he may adopt. The best way in general, before sitting down to compose, is to fix on the main impression intended to be made, to keep the mind and pen in a state of subordination to the final point, and to compel everything to contribute its due share towards it.

Further, it is a great fault, and one which even good preachers sometimes commit in a manner that entirely spoils the effect of their sermons, to utter that in the previous parts of the discourse which is by its very nature more peculiarly suited to the conclusion, unless in the instance mentioned in a former Lecture,* which forms a particular exception. At any rate some π in point may be reserved, even where the appropriate impression of the subject is anticipated; but the error referred to, if committed to writing, may be remedied by transposing such part to the end of the discourse and supplying its place by some other Topic.

In studying a peroration there are two ideas that seem to me important. First, fix or place strongly before your mind the pattern of what your hearer ought to be in reference to the subject discussed; and, secondly, conceive as correctly as possible what the hearer actually *is*; and from these two ideas form your address. For want of this management the preacher may say a great many excellent things, but may pass over the most important ones, and such as most directly apply to the state and character of his hearers.

To preserve attention you will not be very anxious to say all you can; it is better to be too short than too long, provided the matter be strong and strongly expressed. To travel round and round the final period like a horse in a mill is exceedingly wearisome: it is better to close with dignity and spirit, in some bold and terse sentence, perhaps while the hearer is prepared for your proceeding further: and, I may add, it is proper to direct such last sentence rather towards the gospel of peace than the terrors of Sinai. If, however, you foresee that your peroration will be somewhat long, the discourse must be shortened to admit of it: the people should not be detained beyond the usual time; for, after the moment when they expect dismissal, very little profitable attention will be paid.

Allow me to add that, as of course you will make a short pause when your discussion is ended, you should here endeavour to collect yourself that you may be ready to resume with confidence. In these golden moments you ought to make a strong but private aspiration to heaven that the Holy Spirit may deign to accompany this effort with power to all hearts, 1 Thess. i. 4, 5, &c.

As there are several different methods of constructing a peroration, each of which has its own peculiar advantages, I shall now endeavour to bring the principal of these before you, and illustrate them by such examples as I have been able to collect from good authors. In order to bring your subject to some immediately useful bearing, which is the great point to be aimed at in the peroration, you may

DEDUCE INFERENCES.

In discoursing on doctrines or facts this kind of conclusion is generally

* See Lecture IX., p. 138.

—and very properly—adopted. When the preacher has illustrated any scriptural fact, or explained, proved, or confirmed any doctrine, he has then merely prepared the way for applying the subject to his hearers, and the most natural way of doing this is to draw such inferences as the subject may suggest. The scriptures afford numerous examples of this method of applying a subject: “God has loved us; therefore we ought to love one another,” 1 John iv. 11. With regard to inferences, Dr. Blair very justly observes, “care should be taken, not only that they rise naturally, but, what is less commonly attended to, that they should so much agree with the strain of sentiment throughout a discourse as not to break the unity of the sermon. For inferences, how justly soever they may be deduced from the doctrines of a text, yet have a bad effect, if at the conclusion of the discourse they introduce some subject altogether new, and turn off our attention from the main object to which the mind has been directed. They appear in this case like excrescences jutting out of the body, which form an unnatural addition to it, and tend to enfeeble the composition.

Simeon on Isa. xlii. 16—The mysteriousness of divine providence—draws the following inferences:—

1. That we should be careful not to pass a hasty judgment on the Lord's dealings. We are too apt to exclaim with Jacob (Gen. xlii. 36), “All these things are against me!” yet the trials we complain of may be, as in his case, the necessary means of our preservation; and it is the wisest course for a believer to wait with patience for the issue.

2. That we may safely commit ourselves to God's disposal; for God alone knows what is best for us. He knows too how to accomplish his designs in the best manner. Let us therefore commit all our concerns to him. Let us lie as clay in the potter's hand. In whatsoever distress we be, let us follow the prophet's direction: “Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,” Isa. xxvi. 4.

The same author on Josh. vii. 19, 20—Achan's punishment—infers,

1. The deceitful nature of sin.
2. The certainty of exposure.
3. The awfulness of its award.

The same author on Ps. cxiii. 5 to 8—The divine condescension—concludes with an address introduced by way of inference:—

Does God so condescend to you? Then let me call on you,

1. To adore him.
2. To trust in him.
3. To glorify him.

Authors and preachers abound with conclusions of this kind; but these examples will be quite sufficient for our purpose.

Instead of establishing a doctrine, and then drawing *practical* inferences from it, as exemplified in the foregoing examples, the preacher may treat an important subject *practically*, and then, if he think proper, conclude by a short defence of his doctrine: and perhaps there is no better way of doing this than by showing its utility or necessity. Thus Davies, on 1 Cor. iii. 7, having treated of the divine influences accompanying the gospel, concludes by showing that the very life of religion and the whole success of the gospel depend on them.

Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do something very considerable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the fashion to press a reformation of men's lives, without inculcating the absolute necessity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly such a thing as a thorough reformation to be seen, but mankind are evidently growing worse. Since men think they can do some-

thing, and scorn to be wholly dependent on divine grace, the Lord, as it were, looks on, and suffers them to make the experiment; and, alas! it is likely to be a costly experiment to many. Well may the Lord say, "Woe unto them when I depart from them!"

In this manner Mr. Davies proceeds, for two or three pages, to vindicate his point, by showing the unreasonableness of the contrary.

MAKE REFLECTIONS ON THE SUBJECT.

Such reflections will often be a kind of inferences; but as they will appear in a somewhat different form, and possess a more general character, they are worthy of distinct consideration.

Simeon on Prov. v. 22—The captivating power of sin—concludes with the following reflections:—

1. How thankful should we be for the gospel of Christ!
2. How watchful should we be against the first incursions of sin!
3. How constant should we be in waiting upon the Lord Jesus Christ, both in his public ordinances and in secret prayer!

There is an excellence in this plan, very usual with our author, viz.—when treating of Old Testament passages to turn the hearers to something respecting Christ. The Saviour must appear: the author is determined to find room for him, and this may always be done without force by considering attentively the *relation* which any truth bears to him, the manner in which he taught or exemplified it, &c.

The same author on Hab. ii. 3—Our duty in reference to the promises—constructs his peroration as follows:—

1. How attentive should we be to the promises which God has made to us!
2. How ashamed should we be of ever yielding to unbelief!
3. How awful is the state of those who, instead of being interested in the promises, are obnoxious to the threatenings!

The same author on Ps. xxx. 5—The mercy of God—observes in conclusion—

In this view of the subject I would call your attention to the following obvious and salutary reflections:—

1. How deeply to be pitied are the blind and impenitent world!
2. How richly to be congratulated is the weeping penitent!
3. What praises and thanksgivings are due from the pardoned sinner!

The same author on John xiv. 8 to 11—Christ's oneness with the Father—observes,

Hence we may see—

1. How slow even the best of men are to apprehend and believe the truths of the gospel.
2. How much infirmity there is mixed even with our best services.
3. What reason we have to bless our God, who has provided us with such a Saviour!

The same author on Ezek. xxxvi. 25 to 27—The new heart, &c.

Reflect on the promise in the text—

1. As to its freeness.
2. Its suitableness.
3. Its preciousness, 2 Pet. i. 4.

This a very excellent conclusion, and a very necessary one, giving an opportunity to introduce things which, according to the primary scheme, could not well be included. According to Blair, these reflections may in many cases be conducted in the form of a paraphrase:

I add an example from Henry's exposition—Mal. iii. 18. "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked," &c.

Having briefly explained the words, Mr. Henry proceeds to three reflections, which are in fact truths implied in the text.

1. All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or to hell.

2. In this world it is often hard to *discern between the righteous and the wicked*. They are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net. The righteous are so distempered, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other. There are many who, we think, serve God, who, having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants; and, on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants who, because they followed not with us, did not, as we thought, serve him. But that which especially raised the difficulty here was that the divine Providence seemed to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked; you could not know wicked men by God's frowning upon them, for they commonly prospered in the world, nor righteous men by his smiling upon them, for they were involved with others in the same common calamity. None now knows God's *love or hatred by all that is before him*, Eccl. ix. 1.

3. At the bar of Christ, in the last judgment, it will be easy to *discern between the righteous and the wicked*; for then every man's character will be both perfected and perfectly discovered, every man will then appear in his true colours, and his disguises will be taken off. Some men's sins indeed go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after; however, in the great day, we shall see who was righteous and who wicked. Every man's condition likewise will be both perfected and everlastingly determined; the righteous will then be perfectly happy, and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture or alloy. When the righteous are all set on the right hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left hand, and are told to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves, therefore, we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and, as to others, we must *judge nothing before the time*.

RAISE PROPOSITIONS.

I have already noticed Burkitt's two-fold division of a text. If the preacher be disposed to treat his subject in a purely expository manner, he may employ Burkitt's proposition (intimated by the word "learn") as inferences, or, more properly, points of enlarged discussion, as there stated. This is a very edifying variety, of which Mr. Simeon has several instances.

Simeon on Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24—The Christian's experience and hopes. His heads are:—

I. The believer's present experience.

1. The saint with his God.

2. His God with him.

II. His future prospects

1. Guidance all the way to glory.

2. Glory itself at the end.

To conclude (he says) see then the Christian's life exhibited:—

1. As an arduous life.

2. An anxious life.

3. A happy life.

4. A glorious life.

Now these in fact are so many propositions to be treated in a familiar manner, but requiring some degree of argument and proof.

Ps. xxv. 11—The proper method of praying to God. The conclusion turns upon the following propositions:—

1. The vilest sinner has no reason to despair.
2. The most eminent saints have no ground to boast.
- 1 Kings xviii. 21—Decision of character.

The subject warrants us to assert that, in comparing life to a journey, decision undoubtedly furnishes—

1. The easiest way.
2. The safest way.
3. The happiest way.

These three points might obviously have formed the principal divisions of the subject.

ADDRESS DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

This is evidently a matter of considerable importance, and well deserves your attentive study; for it requires much experimental skill and a deep acquaintance with the human heart to adapt your address to all the varieties of character which come before you—the converted and unconverted,—the ignorant, the careless, the sensual and profane,—the moralist and the hypocrite,—the wavering and irresolute,—the doubting, tempted, and dejected in spirit,—the backslider,—the aged and the young. Good sense will direct the most suitable application, better than any general rules. Much may be learned from the pointed addresses of Davies, Walker, &c. Those living preachers who excel in this branch of ministerial duty should also be frequently heard.

President Davies, vol. iv., on Jer. v. 3—Mortality improved.

I hope this subject will confirm the wavering hopes of some of you, and enable you to draw the happy conclusion, Well, if this be conversion, I think I may venture to pronounce myself a converted character. Then happy are you indeed. I have not time to say many comfortable things to you at present, but go to your Bibles; there you will find precious promises enough; live and feast upon them, and ere long they will be all fulfilled to you, and you shall live and feast with your Saviour in paradise.

My main business to-day is with the *unconverted*; and have not some of you discovered yourselves to be such this day? Well, what is to be done now? can you go on careless and secure under this tremendous conviction? I hardly think any of you have arrived to such a pitch of presumption and fool-hardiness as this. Must you despair, and give up all hopes of salvation? No, unless you choose it. I mean unless you choose to neglect the means appointed for your conversion, and harden yourselves in sin. If you are determined on this course, then you may despair indeed; there is not the least ground of hope for you: but should you now rouse out of your security, and seek the Lord in earnest, you have the same encouragement to hope which any one of the many millions of converts in heaven or earth had while in your state: therefore let me persuade you to take this course immediately.

But when I begin to persuade I am in Jeremiah's perplexity: "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?" ch. vi. 10. Shall I speak to you *men of business* and hurry? Alas! you have no leisure to mind such a trifle as your soul. Shall I speak to you, *men of wealth*? Alas! this is a business beneath your notice. What! a gentleman cry for converting grace! that would be a strange sight indeed. Shall I speak to you, *old men*, my venerable fathers in age? Alas! you are so hardened by a long course of sinning that you are not likely to hear. Shall I speak to you, ye *relicts* of those families where death has made such a havoc? * Surely you must be disposed to hear me; surely you cannot put me off so soon. I hope sickness and death have been sent among you as my assistants, that is, to enforce what I say, and be the means of your conversion. Shall I speak to you, *young people*? Alas! you are too merry and gay to listen to such serious things, and you perhaps think it is time enough as yet. Thus I am afraid you will put me off; I shall hardly know where to turn, for of all the unconverted among us I have had most hopes of you. Old sinners are so confirmed in their estrangements from God that there is little hope of such veterans; but the habits of sin are not so strong in you, and God is wont to work upon persons of your age. If you then put me off, where shall I turn? Behold, I turn to the Gen-

* The sermon was delivered in a time of great and general sickness and mortality.

tiles. Poor Negroes,* shall I find one among you that is willing to turn to God? Many of you are willing to be baptized, but that is not the thing; are you willing to turn to God with all your hearts, as I have explained to you? This is the grand point. What do your hearts answer to it? If you also refuse, if you *all* refuse, then what remains for your poor minister to do but to return home and make this complaint to him that sent him: "Lord, there were unconverted sinners among my hearers, and in my poor way I made an honest trial to turn them to thee, but it was in vain; they refused to return, and therefore I must leave them to thee, to do what thou pleasest with them." Oh! will you constrain me to make this complaint upon any of you to my divine Master? Oh! free me from the disagreeable necessity. Come, come all, rich and poor, young and old, bond and free, "come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up; and we shall live in his sight."

— Simeon on John vi. 28, 29—The necessity of faith. Having explained the subject, and shown its necessity (or rather its preeminence), he concludes by the following address, which I give at length as a good example of the point in hand, and one which is well worthy of your imitation.

1. Is there, then, an *enquirer* here? I suppose there are some who are ready to ask, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Let me, before I reply to this, ask in return, Are you *sincere* in making this enquiry? And will you, if I set before you the very truth of God, endeavour earnestly to comply with it? If this be really the disposition of your minds, then do I confidently return to you the answer which Paul gave to the jailer's enquiry, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This is the work which must be done by all: and, this really and truly done, you shall as surely find acceptance with God as if you were already in heaven. I do not say that when you have done this there remains nothing more to be done; but I say that, if this be really done, all the rest will follow. Only find the sweetness of that truth, "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," and you will soon attain the character inseparable from it, you will not "walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. But methinks I hear the voice of an *objector*. Some one, perhaps, is saying, "A fine easy way to heaven indeed! Only believe, and you may live as you will, and be sure of heaven at the last!" But this objection will never be urged by one who knows what faith really is. Were it a mere assent to any set of truths, we might well be alarmed at the virtue assigned to it. But it is a grace which contains in it the seed of all other graces. We speak of a living, not a dead faith; and a living faith will as surely be productive of holiness both of heart and life as the light of the sun will dispel the shadows of the night. But the objector will say that our whole statement is contrary to the holy scriptures, since our blessed Lord, in answer to one who had asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The same answer will I give, if, like that enquirer, you are determined to save yourself by your doings. But then, remember, you must keep them all, and perfectly too, and from the first to the latest moment of your existence. But if, in one instance, even though it be in thought only, you fail, the law will curse you to all eternity; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And, if you will not rest your hopes on such an obedience as this, then is there no other refuge for you but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor any other hope of acceptance for you than through faith in him. But, if you still wish to adhere to the commandments know that "this is God's commandment, that you believe in his Son Jesus Christ," and that there is no commandment in the decalogue more peremptory than this, since it is expressly declared that, if you obey it, you shall be saved; if you obey it not, you shall be damned.

3. Let me not close this subject without a few words to one as an *approver*. It is truly delightful to think that, however hostile the heart of man is to this doctrine, there are some who cordially approve of it. Beloved brother, whoever thou art, who embracest it from thy heart, I congratulate thee from my inmost soul. For, in relation to all other works, a self-righteous man can never tell whether he has a sufficiency of them to justify him before God. To his latest hour he must be in fearful suspense about the state of his soul; but thou hast in thy own bosom a ground of the fullest

* In America, where this sermon was preached, many Negroes attended the preaching of the gospel.

assurance. The work of faith is such as will at once commend itself to thy conscience as really done. Thou wilt feel a consciousness that thou renoucest every other hope and reliest on Christ alone. And in Christ there is such a sufficiency of all that thou needest that thou canst not possibly entertain a doubt whether he be able to save thee to the uttermost. Go on, then, "strong in faith and giving glory to God." And as the world will look for the fruits of thy faith, yea, and as God himself also will judge by them, see that thou show thy faith by thy works, and that thou "abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God."

The same author on Prov. viii. 29, &c.—Wisdom's address to men—concludes by enlarging on the following thoughts :—

Hear the voice of wisdom,

1. You children in age.
2. You children in understanding.
3. You children in grace.

A multitude of examples might be selected from the same author, and I must in justice add that he has manifested much skill in constructing them so as to furnish great variety.

APPLY THE SUBJECT IN DIFFERENT VIEWS.

This, though not very different from the preceding, and amounting in the end to the same thing, will yet suggest a suitable variety in the mode of address.

Simeon on Isa. xlv. 9—Striving with our Maker—concludes,

1. In a way of indignant reproof. Who amongst us has been guilty of the crime here reprobated? Yea, whose life has not been one continued act of rebellion against God? Now, if it were "our *Maker*" only that had been so treated by us, no words would have been sufficient to declare the enormity of our crime. But our Maker has been our *Redeemer* also; yea, and he has given his own life a ransom for us: yet have we "trodden under foot his blood" by our contemptuous indifference, and even "crucified him afresh" by our continuance in sin. Judge you, then, what we deserve at God's hands. And now let me ask whether you intend to persist in this conduct? If you do, I can say nothing but what Paul said to persons of this character, "Your damnation is just."

2. In a way of compassionate exhortation. The prophet Jeremiah, having stated the very argument before us, and shown that God might justly, as a potter, mar the work which had presumed to rise up against him, goes on to observe that, notwithstanding all our past guilt, God is yet ready to forgive us, if only with penitent and contrite hearts we turn unto him. And happy am I to confirm this blessed sentiment, yea, and to declare that not one, whatever may have been his guilt in past times, shall ever be cast out, provided he come in the name of Jesus Christ, founding his hope on his all-atoning sacrifice and his all-prevailing intercession. As God's servant, then, I now announce to you these blessed tidings, and declare, in God's name, that, "though your sins may have been red as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they may have been as crimson, they shall be as wool." Only cease from strife on your part, and God will be reconciled to you, and be your God, for ever and ever.

Simeon on Mal. iii. 8—Sin a robbery of God.

Let me now in conclusion address you,

1. In a way of indignant enquiry. Will you continue to "rob God?" &c.
2. In a way of affectionate exhortation. Undertake not to pay Jehovah from any funds of your own. To all eternity you would be unable to present to him an equivalent for the smallest sin. But you need not attempt it. In Christ you have "a propitiation, not for your sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Go to him, therefore, as your surety, and plead with God all that he has done and suffered for you, &c.

The same author on Hab. ii. 20—God greatly to be feared.

From this subject we may gain ample matter,

1. For reproof. It is truly surprising that, with all our knowledge of God, we

should be so regardless of him as not to have him "in all (or any of) our thoughts," &c.

2. For encouragement. God is indeed in his holy temple, ready to hear the weeping suppliant, and mighty to save his repentant people, &c.

The same author on Micah vi. 2, 3—God's controversy with his people,

Conceiving then the cause terminated, I will offer a few words,

1. In a way of candid appeal.

2. In a way of salutary advice. Offer not excuses *now* which will not avail you in the day of judgment, &c.

RECAPITULATE.

It has been common to rail against the practice of repeating the heads of a discourse towards the close, and referring in some sort to the principle points of the subject in the subsequent prayer. The latter I think requires great delicacy; but the former cannot be given up, as it is one method out of many of oratorical skill for the purpose of giving effect to a discourse; and, if the recapitulation be coupled with strong comments on the general subject, it will form one of the most powerful methods of concluding. There is nothing artificial in this method of peroration; for when many things have been said, and many words employed to illustrate and confirm them, what can be more natural than to bring the main points together in close order, to prevent their escape? We have an example of this in the book of Deuteronomy, in which is to be found almost every figure calculated to persuade. Deut. xi. 26, 27: "Behold, I set (or have set) before you this day a blessing and a curse," &c. And indeed the whole book has its name from being a recapitulation of former injunctions, experiences, &c. This is what Keckerman calls bringing the several lines together, as rays are collected in the focus of a burning glass, to inflame the hearts of the auditors.

Blair on 2 Pet. iii. 3—On scoffing at religion.

The conclusion from all these reasonings which we have pursued is that religion and virtue, in all their forms, either of *doctrine or of precept—of piety towards God, integrity towards men, or regularity in private life*—are so far from affording any ground of ridicule to the petulant that they are entitled to our highest veneration. They are names which should never be mentioned but with the utmost honour. It is said in scripture, "fools make a mock at sin." They had better make a mock at pestilence, at war, or famine. With one who would choose these public calamities for the subject of his sport you would not be inclined to associate; you would fly from him as worse than a fool, as a man of distempered mind. Yet certain it is that, to the great society of mankind, sin is a greater calamity than pestilence, or famine, or war; therefore in the seat of the scorner never sit, &c.

If there be any fault here, I should think it is that the recapitulation is too *short*. This peroration should be read as a good specimen of *Comment*.

Simeon on Num. xiv. 20, 21—God's answer to the intercession of Moses. The conclusion is a summary or concentration of the chief parts of the discourse.

Behold now this glory of the Lord! see how it shines throughout this mysterious dispensation! see his condescension in hearing prayer—his mercy in forbearing vengeance—his justice in punishing sin—his goodness in rewarding virtue—his faithfulness in fulfilling his word—and his power to execute his sovereign will and pleasure! Let the whole earth contemplate it. Let all transmit the knowledge of it to those around them, and assist in spreading it to the remotest heathen. Let all expect the time when this view of God shall be universal through the whole world, and all shall give him the glory of his immutable perfections.

And, whilst we view the glory of God in his past works, let us remember what will

be the final issue of all his dispensations. His glory will hereafter shine in still brighter splendour. When his answers to the prayers of all his people shall be known how marvellous will his condescension and grace appear!—When the sins of the whole world shall be made manifest, how shall we be filled with wonder at his long-suffering and forbearance!—How tremendous will his justice and severity be found when millions of impenitent sinners are cast headlong into the bottomless abyss!—And, when his obedient people shall be exalted to thrones of glory, how will his goodness and mercy be admired and adored!—Then also will his truth and faithfulness be seen in the exact completion of every promise he has ever given, and his power and might be gratefully acknowledged by all whom he has redeemed, sanctified, and saved.

This then is certain, that in every human being he will be glorified. But the question is, How will he be glorified in *me*? will it be in my salvation or condemnation? In answering this question aright we are all deeply interested: nor will it be difficult to answer it, provided we enquire what our real character is. Do we resemble the unbelieving and rebellious Israelites, or those believing spies who “followed the Lord fully?” Vast was the difference between them, and consequently the discrimination will be easy. The Lord grant that we may “so judge ourselves now that we may not be judged of the Lord” in that awful day.

The same author on Psa. cxix. 4 to 6—Practical religion enforced—simply enumerates the heads of his discourse, and closes with Heb. xiii. 20, 21, in the following manner:—

Be you then, brethren, Christians indeed. Get just views of your duty both to God and man. Be like-minded with God in relation to it, desiring nothing but to be and to do all that God himself requires. And know where all your help and hope is, not in yourselves, but in the Lord your God, who alone can guide you by his counsel, and bring you to glory. “Now the God of peace,” &c.

Having pointed out the different methods upon which conclusions are usually constructed, I shall now proceed to offer you some specimens of *different kinds of address* suited to this part of a discourse. These I shall, for obvious reasons, distinguish according to their leading characteristics, though you must not expect to find the examples of a perfectly simple and unmixed character. I begin with

THE APPELLATORY.

Under this head may be included all those perorations which consist chiefly of direct appeal to the understanding and the conscience of the hearer, as to the soundness, the truth, the reasonableness, &c., of the thing advanced, notwithstanding the force of prejudice, or habit, or inclination to the contrary hitherto prevailing. Thus our Saviour says (Luke xii. 57), “Yea, and why judge ye not what is right?” and Paul (1 Cor. x. 15), “Judge ye what I say.” Such appeals are always to be accompanied or followed by strong comment, and perhaps counsels also. But this kind of ending should not be ventured upon unless you conceive that you have successfully lodged some conviction in the heart. In this case an appeal will always be happy in its effects.

Beddome closes his sermon against religious persecution (Acts ix. 4) with a fine appeal to persecutors, which is given as the language which the Saviour himself might be supposed to utter.

“I appeal to your reason and conscience: What injury have I done thee? What provocation have I given thee? Which of my offices offends thee? What part of my character or conduct makes me obnoxious to thy resentment? Art thou cruel because I am merciful? For which of my good works dost thou persecute me? As to my people, they are meek and unoffending, and not likely to disturb your peace. I appeal to your unbiased judgment, Can force and violence produce conviction? Can the prison and the cross be proper means of instruction? Does not all this violence show the malignity of your heart against my gospel, the extermination of which is your real

design?" If, my brethren, such were the language of Jesus, are you who openly or secretly oppose the gospel or its followers prepared to reply to Christ's questions? If not, how will you answer at the high tribunal in the great day?

Simeon closes a sermon on repentance with an appeal upon the several points on which he had insisted. The discourse is founded on Joel ii. 12—14; and, as this example is the type of a very numerous class of perorations, I shall give it at some length. Our author says,

And now let me ask,

1. Is not this repentance necessary? I readily grant that many of you are free from anything that comes under the name of gross sin; but who amongst you has not grievously departed from God? Who has not shamefully slighted our blessed Saviour? Who has not resisted the motions of the Holy Spirit? Who has not lived for time rather than for eternity, and to himself rather than to his God? Here then is reason enough for every one of you to weep and mourn, and to rend your very souls to pieces before God, &c.

2. Are not the considerations with which the duty is enforced sufficient encouragements to the performance of it? I might have enforced the duty with far different arguments, and "persuaded you rather by the terrors of the Lord" to turn unto him; but I greatly prefer the views of God exhibited in the text, &c.

3. Will not the mercies offered you amply compensate for all the efforts which you may make to obtain them? Truly, if there were but a "peradventure" that you should find mercy, it were worth all the labour of ten thousand years to obtain it. Think only what it must be to be monuments of God's righteous indignation to all eternity, and what it must be, on the other hand, to be everlasting monuments of his grace and love. Can you contemplate this alternative, and duly estimate its importance? No: you must go down to hell and taste the misery of the damned, and be exalted to heaven to enjoy the blessedness of the saints in glory, ere you can form any just idea of what is before you either to be suffered or enjoyed, according as your state shall be found before God.

THE ENTREATING.

The scriptures afford abundant examples in which God himself condescends to entreat his unworthy and unhappy creatures to accept his blessings; and, as the ambassadors of Christ, we are also bound to beseech and to entreat sinners to be reconciled to God.

Take Acts xxiv, 25: "Go thy way for this time," &c.

In conclusion I again address thee, procrastinating sinner. Thou pleadest for to-morrow with an eloquence worthy of a better cause. "To-morrow, to-morrow," is the burden of every evening song. Oh! my hearer, would you think to-morrow a proper time to stop a leak in the ship discovered to-day? Is not the idea of security abandoned by this? I cannot leave you under this delusion. "Dismiss me not thus. For your own sake, and out of tender compassion to your perishing immortal soul, I would not willingly take up with such a dismissal and excuse: no, not though you fix a time, though you should determine on the next year, or month, or week, or day. I would turn upon you with all the eagerness and tenderness of friendly importunity, and entreat you to bring the matter to an issue even now; for if you say, 'I will think on these things to-morrow,' I shall have but little hope, and shall conclude that all I have hitherto urged, and all that you have heard, has been uttered in vain." *

THE EXPOSTULATORY.

This kind of address is well calculated to carry conviction to the mind in the most efficient manner. What, for instance, can be more forcible than the expostulations of scripture, mingled as they are both with appeal and entreaty? See Isa. l. 5 and 11, lv. 2; Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, xxxiii. 11; Micah vi. 3—5.

In your expostulations care must be taken that there be nothing harsh in

* Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion.

your language ; all your expressions must manifest an affectionate concern, a compassionate interest, in reference to the welfare of your hearers.* I cannot give a more complete or a more excellent example of this kind than is furnished by Foster in his Introductory Essay to the Rise and Progress of Religion.† Having given a vivid but just representation of the state of unconverted persons, absorbed in what are falsely called the pleasures of life, and of those forebodings of futurity which cannot be excluded from reflection, our author proceeds as follows :—

Here we conclude this long course of remonstrance. Perhaps you are ready to say, “it is a rueful and offensive representation, just such as a splenetic spirit, which has quarrelled with the world, would be gratified to make in the wish to poison the satisfactions of those who have yet some cause to regard it as a friend, and who, at all events, think it yet too soon to fall into hostility with themselves.” But consider at whose cost it will be that you repel a statement which you cannot refuse. The truth of the matter goes, in reality, no further off from you for being rejected, any more than the hour of death can be deferred by refusing to think of it or by heedlessness of the solemnity of the prospect. That the preceding description of your state is in substance the truth we may challenge you to deny—to deny, that is to say, upon such serious and honest considerations as you cannot refuse without being guilty of the most horrible trifling. And we may appeal to your own reason, thus exercised, what would you think of a doctrine or a teacher that would consent to leave you satisfied with a plan of life which, for the sake of this world, renounces the good and braves the evil of the world to come? But though the representation, thus far, be of a menacing character, all is not dark. As we have seen in a pictured view of Babylon, supposed on the eve of its fall, there remains one portion of the hemisphere, and one celestial luminary, not yet obscured by the portentous shade.‡ While no colours can throw too gloomy an aspect on the condition in which you have been described, there shines on your view that great resource to which all this series of what may have seemed austere reprehensions have been aimed to constrain your attention. And, if you could be made to apprehend the importance which there really is in the considerations so inadequately conceived and expressed, you would be awakened to wonder and gratitude that, after so constant and systematic a rejection of the sovereign good, you should not now find “a great gulf fixed between it and you.” On your side of that tremendous chasm there is still religion accessible to you in all its blessings of deliverance, peace, and security, for hereafter. You are still on that favoured ground where you are invited by a God of mercy, a Redeemer with his atoning sacrifice, a divine Spirit of all power and operations of assistance, to enter yet at last into the possession of that which will be a glorious portion when all you have been striving with the world to gain will vanish in dust and smoke.

Shall we anticipate another objection in the form of a query? “What can we do? we cannot *make* ourselves religious. Though we should admit that this is all true, and of the last importance, we cannot for that command and compel our dispositions to change into the new order required. What can we do?” The answer to this should be appropriate to the temper in which it is spoken. We have heard of instances of expressions like these being uttered evidently in a spirit of impious and desperate carelessness. There was no real concern about the subject, but a determined addiction to the world, and to so much of sin as should involve a wilful avoidance of reflection, a stupid and defying indifference to consequences ; and all this taking to itself an excuse, or almost a justification, from the moral impotence of our nature. The man was in effect saying, “As I am resolved to pursue my course, it were a satisfaction to believe and I *will* believe that I can do no otherwise, and that, as I am to fulfil my destiny, the less I trouble myself with thinking about it the better.” Now, to a person who should reply to religious admonitions in this disposition of mind, we should deem it utterly trifling and useless to offer any pleading of speculatively theological or of metaphysical argument. The reasoning faculty of such a man is a wretched slave, that will not, and dare not, listen to one word in presence and in contravention of his pas-

* See expostulatory address to a brother in Lecture VIII. p. 101.

† See also the extract from the same author at pp. 363—366.

‡ Martin's picture of the fall of Belshazzar and of Babylon.

sions and will. The only thing there would be any sense in attempting would be to press on him some strong images of the horror of such a deliberate self-consignment to destruction, and of the monstrous enormity of taking a kind of comfort in his approach to the pit, from the circumstance that a principle of his nature leads him to do it; just as if, because there is that in him which impels him to perdition, it would therefore not be *he* that would perish. Till some awful blast smite on his fears, his reason and conscience will be unavailing.

If he be guarded on the side of his fears, by entertaining a light opinion of that consequence on which he is so precipitating himself,—should he say that it certainly *would* be a dreadful thing thus resolutely to go forward to it, and a flagrantly absurd one thus to satisfy himself in doing so, *if* he had any such appalling estimate of that future ruin as religious doctrine affects to enforce, but that he believes this threatening to be a prodigious exaggeration,—we have only to reply that, as he has not yet seen the world of retribution, he is to take its estimate of its awards from the declarations of him who knows what they are, and that it is at his peril he presumes to entertain any other. If any one answer to this, that he does not believe in the existence of such declarations, he is not one of the persons we are meaning to address.

What follows is more directly in a way of expostulation :—

But some of you will make the supposed reply, “What can we do?” in a less depraved temper of feeling. We will suppose that you are not quite indifferent on the subject, that you seriously admit the necessity of religion, and that you feel some uneasiness at your estrangement from it; that, in short, you wish you *could* be religious, and in this spirit somewhat despondingly put the question. For you we have a plain, short answer; indeed we have anticipated this in some preceding part of the discourse. You *can* deliberately apply yourself to a serious, honest, prolonged, repeated consideration of the subject. Do not incur the shame, for one moment, of pretending to doubt whether you can do this. On any one of your worldly matters of importance you know that you can fix your thoughts attentively, long, and again; you can severely examine in what manner it is connected with your interests, can weigh the reasons for and against, and look forward to near and more distant consequences. And you *can* do this with respect to religion. Do you allege that the subject being a strange and hitherto foreign one to your thoughts, and also presenting itself to you with a disquieting and reproaching aspect, your minds are strongly inclined to escape from beholding it? What then? You *can* think again of the absolute necessity of considering it, and can compel them back to confront it once more, and still again. You can recollect that nothing will be gained, and all will be lost, by ceasing to think of it. You can reflect that if you dismiss it now, because it does not please you, it will infallibly return upon you ere long to please you still less, and will return ultimately in such imperative force that it can no more be evaded or dismissed.

Perhaps there may be some of you who will complain that, notwithstanding sincere and considerable efforts to this purpose, you find that the subject does not, and seems as if it would not, take effective hold on your spirits, and that you cannot *feel* it to have that importance which you *know* it to have. And what then? again we reply. Are you going to make this a reason for suffering your minds to withdraw from the subject and let it go? The subject cannot go without abandoning you to the dominion of death! The question whether to yield to this obstinate defect of sensibility is the critical point of your contest with the deadly power of evil within you and without you: yield, and all will hasten to your ruin. But, surely, the terror of such a hazard and such an alternative, or the clear conviction at least *that you ought to feel terror at it*, must incite you to persevering and more earnest efforts. Look at it, dwell on it, and see whether a more protracted and intense consideration of it will cause or suffer your resolution to remit. That it should so remit is hardly conceivable of any rational being. But, if it even did so remit, that circumstance itself would bring a new and frightful phenomenon to rouse the spirit which had such a consciousness, and excite it to call for all compassionate powers and agencies to come to its rescue.

And here you are to be admonished that you cannot feel that you are faithfully making the required exertion unless you have recourse to the most approved means for rendering it effectual. You believe that the Almighty admits his creatures, and indeed has, with endless iteration, invited and commanded them to express their necessities in petitions to him, and that he listens, with peculiar favour, to applications for spiritual good. You are not afraid to do this; and you are convinced on the strength of innumerable promises, and of the merits and intercession of Christ, that it

would be successful. Though there did not appear to be any *immediate* success, you believe—you absolutely *know*—that persevering application to heaven *will* finally prevail. You can, with this absolute assurance, implore the removal of that odious insensibility, that indisposition, that aversion even, which you allege as a discouragement from persisting to apply yourselves to the all-important subject, and feel as a temptation to turn away from it. This *can* be done a thousand times over. It can be done as long as the evil and danger continue. And again and again we tell you that at each repetition you *know*, because God has declared it, that such application cannot ultimately fail. And, oh! is it not worth while?

Walker, of Truro, furnishes an example which contains much solemn appeal mingled with affectionate expostulation. The sermon from which it is extracted was delivered in the parish church of Truro, April 27, 1760. It is one of a course on the Church Catechism, and the last on the Apostles' Creed. The text prefixed to most of them is the same: Acts xvi. 30, 31. It was the last sermon that Mr. Walker preached; and many who heard it have borne testimony to the impression made by it as more than commonly powerful.

Alas! alas! my dear friends, how shall many of us appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? For what have we to appear in? Where is our faith in Jesus Christ? What fellowship is there between him and our souls? Where are the works of faith—love to him and to his people? Have we none of these to show? no owning of Christ, no following his words, no renouncing the ways of men for his sake, no love of his people, no giving so much as a cup of water to any because they are his? What, in no kind, in no degree, such works as he will own! and yet shall we receive according to our works? But what can we think of it then, if, instead of owning Christ, we have been opposing him,—if, instead of loving his people, we have been hating them for being so,—if, instead of having any good works to show for ourselves, Christ will find an endless number of evil works to show against us? What can we think of it if nothing shall appear to have been done by us but evil continually—ceaseless, numberless works of darkness, in thought, word, or deed, as many as the days, hours, and minutes of our lives have been? What! my dear friends, will any of us be hardy enough to appear under these circumstances before Christ's judgment-seat, where nothing can be hid, and all will be laid open? Yet, remember, there we must all come, whether we will or no. God will have it so, and who can prevent it? To be plain, I am grieved at heart for many of you, to think how you will make your appearance before the judgment-seat. You have no works to speak there for your belonging to Christ. I can see none. I see works of various kinds that prove you do not belong to him. If a life of pleasure, idleness, company-keeping, indulgence, drunkenness, pride, covetousness, would recommend you to the favour of the Judge, few would be better received than numbers of you. In the name of God, my friends—when you know this moment in your own consciences that if, as you have been and are, you should be called to judgment, you would be as surely cast into hell as if you were already scorching in those dreadful flames—why will you live at such a rate?

Well, we shall all be before the judgment-seat of Christ together. There the controversy between me, persuading you by terrors of the Lord, and you, determining to abide in your sins, will be decided. There it will appear whether your blood will be on your own heads for your obstinate impenitency, or upon mine for not giving you warning. Christ will certainly either acquit or condemn me on this account; and, if I should be acquitted herein, what will become of you? I tremble to think how so many words of mine will be brought up against you on that day. What will you say, what will you answer, how will you excuse yourselves? Oh! sirs, if you will not be prevailed on, you will with eternal self-reproach curse the day that you knew me or heard one word from my mouth. Why, why, why will you die with so aggravated a destruction? Oh! think of the judgment; think of it, and you will not be able to hold it out against your own souls. May the Lord incline you to do so; may he cause this word to sink deep into your hearts; may he show you all your danger, and with an outstretched arm bring you out of the hands of the devil and translate you into the glorious kingdom of his dear Son!

THE REMEDIAL.

Where the discourse has contained a good deal of censure, and, alas! this

"burden of the Lord" is too often necessary—too often we feel ourselves called on to "reprove, rebuke," &c.—but when this is done we should, in the kindest manner possible, propose what is right in the conclusion.

Blair on 1 Cor. xiii. 4, having severely censured and exposed *envy*, proceeds in the peroration to propose a remedy thus :—

Finally, in order to subdue envy, let us bring often into view those religious considerations which regard us particularly as Christians. Let us remember how unworthy we all are in the sight of God, and how much the blessings which each of us enjoys are beyond what we deserve. Let us nourish reverence and submission to that divine government that has appointed to every one such a condition in the world as is fitted for him to possess. Let us recollect how opposite the Christian spirit is to envy, and what sacred obligations it lays upon us to walk in love and charity towards one another. Indeed, when we reflect on the many miseries which abound in human life, on the scanty proportion of happiness which any one is here allowed to enjoy, on the small difference which the diversity of fortune makes on that scanty proportion, it is surprising that envy should ever have been a prevalent passion among men, much more that it should have prevailed among Christians. Where so much is suffered in common little room is left for envy. There is more occasion for pity and sympathy, and inclination to assist each other.

THE DIRECTIVE.

When a peroration consists chiefly of directions, or counsels, it is upon the supposition that the previous discourse has prepared the mind to receive them, as an exordium prepares the mind to listen to the discourse. "A word spoken in due season, how good good is it!" Prov. xv. 23.

Simeon on 2 Kings v. 13—Naaman healed. From the striking resemblance between the conduct of Naaman and those who reject the gospel, he takes occasion to add a few words of advice in the following order :—

1. Bring not to the gospel any preconceived notions of your own.
2. Let not passion dictate in matters of religion.
3. Be willing to take advice from your inferiors.
4. Make trial of the method proposed for your salvation.

These counsels are admirably derived from the subject.

Directions should generally be coupled with such descriptions and arguments as are calculated to stimulate and animate the mind to the performance, in which case the peroration may be denominated

THE ENCOURAGING.

Mr. R. Walker invites attention as a pattern of this kind. His subject is an awakening one founded on Rom. iii. 19. In conclusion he says :—

Be persuaded, my dear friends, that it becomes you to "humble yourselves immediately under the mighty hand of God, that you may be exalted in due time." See that you acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, that you may not be finally condemned with the world; and beg of God that he may search and try you, and make you thoroughly acquainted with your real condition, that finding yourselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, you may repair without delay to that all-sufficient Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who is made of God unto you wisdom, &c., 1 Cor. i. 30.

As for you upon whom the law has already had its effect, who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, be not discouraged: the seeds of consolation are sown in your grief, and "upon you who thus fear his name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;" for this temper is the work of God. It is he who brings that light into the soul whereby its natural deformity is seen; it is he who subdues thy pride. It is the divine Spirit who, ministering the law, removes all thy false grounds of hope and makes thee cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" As John the Baptist, by preaching, roused sinners to a sense of sin, so the Holy Spirit prepares the heart for the reception of the glorious Redeemer: therefore your present painful feelings

should be matter to you of joy. Lift up your heads then, O you trembling souls ! look forward but a very little way, and you may see to the end of that dark valley through which you are now passing.

Baine on Rom. v. 21, the last clause. The idea is that of a kingdom.

Let the subjects of this kingdom preserve their love and fidelity inviolable to its merciful and mighty monarch. Live as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, in a sacred regard to his authority and willing obedience to his laws. Live in friendship and the exercise of kindest affections towards your fellow-members, knit together in love, and praying for their prosperity, that the just may flourish in his reign, and increase in number like the drops of dew that fall from the womb of the morning. Live by faith upon him : *he is Jehovah, the righteousness of his people* ; and cast not away your hope that the reign of grace upon earth will be succeeded *with a kingdom of glory*, where all his faithful subjects shall reign with him for ever.

Blair on fortitude, Psa. xxvii. 3. The whole of the peroration, which in fact is the third head of his discourse, extends over nine pages. The following is the concluding paragraph :—

Animated by these considerations, let us nourish that fortitude of mind which is so essential to a man and a Christian. Let no discouragement nor danger deter us from doing what is right. Through “honour and dishonour, through good report and evil report,” let us preserve fidelity to our God and Saviour. Though a host should encamp against us, let us not fear to discharge our duty. *God assists us in the virtuous conflict*, and will crown the conqueror with eternal rewards : “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” “To him that overcometh,” saith our blessed Lord, “I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father on his throne.”

See also Jay's Sermons, vol. ii., pp. 28 and 125, and Lavington, vol. i., pp. 109 and 458. I cannot afford room for more examples at length, but I recommend this class of conclusions wherever proper to the subject.

THE CONSOLING.

It is a sin to neglect the objects for whom this title is intended. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,” is the divine command ; but it is not any kind of senseless cant that will serve the purpose. As you would not think to entertain a person that had a fine ear for music with Scotch bagpipes, so a preacher must not expect to cheer or console a gracious soul with sounds that do not harmonize with its spiritual sensibilities. As far as possible we must be like Jesus, Isa. l. 4 : “The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” By this passage it appears that the skill necessary is a divine gift : happy is he that possesses it.

Walker on 2 Chron. v. 13, 14. The subject is of a cheerful strain, and in the conclusion he turns to a character supposed not to have entered into this joy.

But, alas ! says one, what is all this to me ? My harp must hang still upon the willows ; how shall I, a wretched captive, presume to sing the songs of Zion ? No evidences of grace are legible in my heart ; grief and fear have so thoroughly possessed it that the love of God can find no room. How then, or to what purpose, shall I lift up my voice, while my whole soul is cast down within me ? Now to such I would answer, in general, Let your case be as bad as you suppose it, yet still you have cause to bless the Lord. If you cannot thank him for his special grace, yet surely you ought to praise him for his unwearied patience and those offers of mercy that are daily made to you : bless him that you are still upon earth, in the land of hope, and not confined to the regions of everlasting despair.

But I stop here ; come forward into the light, thou dark discouraged soul, and, in the presence of God, give a true and proper answer to these few questions. Thou

complaineſt of thy want of love to God, and thy complaints indeed ſhow that thou haſt no delighting and enjoying love; but answer me,—

1. Haſt thou not a deſiring, ſeeking love? A poor man who deſires and ſeeks the world ſhows his love to it as convincingly as the rich man who delights in it; the tendency of the heart appears as truly in an anxious purſuit as in delightful enjoyment. But, as the weakneſs of hope is frequently miſtaken for the want of deſire, I aſk,

2. Do you not find a moaning and lamenting love? You ſhow that you loved your friends by grieving for their deaths as well as by delighting in them whiſt they lived. If you heartily lament it as your greateſt unhappineſs and loſs when you think that God has caſt you off, and that you are devoid of grace and cannot ſerve him as you would, this is an undoubted evidence that your heart is not void of the love of God.

3. Would you not rather have a heart to love God than to have all the riches and pleaſures in the world? Would it not comfort you more than any thing elſe if you could be ſure that he loved you, and if you could perfectly love and obey him? If ſo, then know aſſuredly that it is not the want of love, but the want of aſſurance, that cauſes thy dejection. And therefore I charge thee, in the name of God, to render unto him that tribute of praiſe which is due to him. To be much employed in this heavenly duty has an evident tendency to vanquiſh all hurtful doubts and fears, by keeping the ſoul near to God and within the warmth of his love and goodneſs,—by diſſipating diſtruſtful, vexing thoughts, and diverting the mind to ſweeter things,—by keeping off the tempter, who uſually is leaſt able to follow us when we are higheſt in the praiſes of our God and Saviour,—and, eſpecially, by bringing out the evidences of our ſincerity while the chief graces are in exerciſe. Praiſe brings comfort to the ſoul as ſtanding in the ſunſhine brings warmth to the body, or as the ſight of a dear friend rejoices the heart, without any reaſoning or arguing the caſe. Come then, my dear friends, and make the experiment. Obey the voice which proceeds out of the throne, ſaying, “Praiſe our God, all you his ſervants, all you that fear him, both great and ſmall.”

I might here quote numerous examples of conſolatory addreſs adapted to *different occaſions and circumſtances*, but this my limits forbid; and I now paſs to

THE ELEVATING.

In this claſs of perorations the aim of the preacher is to raiſe in the minds of his hearers ſuitable images of the dignity or majeſty of the ſubject of diſcourſe. The following example is of this character:—

Blair on 2 Pet. iii. 10—The diſſolution of the world.

Having now treated both of the creation and diſſolution of the world, I cannot conclude without calling your thoughts to the magnificent view which theſe events afford of the kingdom and dominion of the Almighty. With reverence we contemplate his hand in the ſignal diſpenſations of Providence among men, deciding the fate of battles, raiſing or overthrowing empires, caſting down the proud, and lifting up the low from the duſt. But what are ſuch occurrences to the power and wiſdom which he diſplays in the higher revolutions of the univerſe, by his word forming or diſſolving worlds, at his pleaſure tranſplanting his creatures from one world to another, that he may carry on new plans of wiſdom and goodneſs and fill all ſpace with the wonders of creation! Succeſſive generations of men have ariſen to poſſeſs the earth. By turns they have paſſed away and gone into regions unknown. Uſ he has raiſed up to occupy their room. We too ſhall ſhortly diſappear. But human exiſtence never perishes. Life only changes its form, and is renewed. Creation is ever filling, but never full. When the whole intended courſe of the generations of men ſhall be finiſhed, then, as a ſhepherd leads his flock from one paſture to another, ſo the great Creator leads forth the ſouls which he has made into new and prepared abodes of life. They go from this earth to a new earth and new heavens; and ſtill they remove only from one province of the divine dominion to the other. Amidſt all thoſe changes of nature the great Ruler himſelf remains “without variableneſs or ſhadow of turning.” To him theſe ſucceſſive revolutions of being are but “as yeſterday when it is paſt.” From his eternal throne he beholds worlds riſing and paſſing away, meaſures out to the creatures who inhabit them powers and faculties ſuited to their ſtate, and diſtributes among them rewards and puniſhments proportioned to their actions. What an aſtoniſhing view do ſuch meditations afford of the kingdom of God, infinite in its extent, everlaſting in its duration, exhibiting, in every period, the reign of perfect righteouſneſs and

wisdom ! "Who by searching can find out God ? who can find out the Almighty to perfection ?" "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints !"

THE ALARMING.

What Claude calls the violent and vehement, from the rapid manner of expression, is well calculated to arouse the fears of the ungodly, or to precipitate the mind into a state of alarm. In the language of the prophet, it is to "Cry aloud, and spare not : " it is to exhibit the terrors of Mount Sinai, or an approaching judgment. Such addresses have, by a divine blessing, been instrumental to the saving conversion of thousands ; but I think the final sentence or period of such conclusions ought to cherish hope. Dr. Watts's conclusion of his discourse on Rev. vi. 15—17, is thus managed. The whole sermon* blows an alarm ; but the third part, which might be easily thrown into the form of a peroration, is worth the study of a preacher. It is difficult to conceive any thing more terrific, † as may easily be supposed even from the following meagre extracts :—

Consider how vain all the refuges and hopes of sinners will be found in that dreadful day of the Lord. They will call on the rocks and mountains, &c. Who shall call on these stupendous works of God ? Wicked kings, mighty men, rich men, &c. They had once the direction of armies, &c. ; but now the day of their power is over.

Rocks and mountains ! Oh how vain to call *creatures* to screen from the *Creator* ! Rocks and mountains have ever been obedient to God Rocks and mountains, in their cliffs, and dens, and caverns, may be occasional refuges to hide men from storms or from their pursuers ; but he whose eyes are as a flame of fire penetrates the deepest recesses. Can any hide where he cannot see ? Rocks and mountains are often places of defence (Is. xxxiii. 16) ; but can these defend against Omnipotence ? He throws down the mountains and tears the rocks in pieces, Nahum i. 2, 6. Rocks and mountains, indeed, falling on weak and feeble worms, will crush them to atoms. If such be the wish of these great men, as though annihilation were possible, this were equally vain. They may seek death, but death will flee from them. The work of death has terminated. He gives up his charge. Therefore to which of your refuges, O sinners ! will you turn ? The sentence of your condemnation you *must* hear. You must endure everlasting burnings. You will have no rest day nor night ; the smoke of your torment will ascend for ever and ever, unless you now "kiss the Son," submit yourselves to him, accept his grace, and come to him for life and salvation.

I need only add here a short extract from Saurin on Heb. xii. 29.

How often have we represented to you the dreadful consequences of your delays ! We would take you to witness, you walls of the church, if you were capable of giving evidence. But you shall be our witnesses you discourses preached here, a remembrance of which shall be awakened in that great day when our hearers shall give an account of the use they have made of them. Consciences, you shall be our witnesses. You have heard our directions ; you yourselves shall be our witnesses. Gainsayers, you who have so often pretended, by reversing the ideas which the gospel gives us of the mercy of God, to obscure others which it gives of his justice and vengeance. We ourselves must and will witness against you, ere the flames of hell seize upon you.

There are innumerable passages in Alleine's and Baxter's works and many in Davies and other authors of this character, that might suggest conclusions, although such passages do not stand in the rank of conclusions.

As it is impossible to exemplify all the different kinds of address which may be adopted, I shall content myself with having given specimens of the

* See an extract from this discourse at p. 17.

† The fact representing a French preacher who painted the day of judgment, and brought it so close to the imagination of the hearers that they all at once started from their seats and cried out, is well known. [This occurred when Massillon preached on "The Small Number of the Elect."]

most important, and shall close this article by very briefly remarking on two or three others ; such as

THE TENDER, OR COMPASSIONATE.

This kind turns on the feelings of the preacher's own mind in reference to the subject in hand, as when Jeremiah thus expresses himself (ch. xiii. 17), "But if you will not hear my message, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and my eye shall weep sorely, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Again : "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men," &c., ch. ix. 1, 2, &c.

THE INDIGNANT.

There are a great many perorations of this kind. The feeling intended to be described is that which Jacob felt when he uttered his comment on the character of Simeon and Levi, Gen. xlix. 6 : "Oh ! my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, my honour, be not thou united," &c.

THE ABRUPT.

This peroration may sometimes have a very happy effect.

Davies on 2 Chron. xxxii. 25—Hezekiah's ingratitude—thus concludes,

It need afford you no surprise if my subject overwhelms me, so as to disable me from making a formal application of it : I leave you to your own thoughts upon it, and I am apt to think they will constrain you to cry out in a consternation, with me, Oh the amazing, horrid, base, unprecedented ingratitude of man ! And oh the amazing, free rich, overflowing, infinite, unprecedented goodness of God ! Let these two miracles be the wonder of the whole universe.

It is said of Bucholtzer that he often closed his sermons designedly in some such terse abrupt manner as the following :—

Here, my brethren, I stop, and leave the Holy Spirit to preach to you.

Now, Christians, I have done my part, may the Lord condescend to do his in your hearts !

I have planted and watered ; may God give the increase !

I have been preaching to you, and setting before you the gospel of salvation ; may the Lord God apply it to your hearts, for his glory and your eternal felicity !

May the Lord set home to your hearts what I have been preaching !. For my part I am only his messenger to you ; he is the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls !

With some one such sentence he frequently concluded his discourse. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the Master of assemblies," Eccles. xii. 11.

Others frequently conclude with some suitable passage of scripture, as Farquhar on Ps. lxxiii. 28—The advantages of devotion.

I shall conclude with two passages of scripture that are much to our present purpose, and serve to show the unconquerable power of piety amidst the greatest calamities. The former is David's triumph in the midst of public danger and distress, Ps. xlv. 1—7 : "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," &c. The other is the conclusion of Habakkuk's hymn : "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus blessed is the man, O God ! whom thou causest to approach to thee ! To God therefore let us draw near with a true heart and in full assurance of faith.

“The same author on Matt. xxii. 39—“The love of our neighbour”—very appropriately concludes by quoting Col. iii. 12—14, “Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you: and, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

Here permit me to suggest that there may be now and then great propriety in concluding with the words of the text on which your discourse is founded, uttered with great solemnity and emphasis, without any note whatever.

I must now conclude this lecture, which I cannot better do than in the words of a foreign writer, whose advice, rightly understood cannot be too deeply regarded. He observes, “When you have proved the truth of the principles you laid down, you have done but little of the ministerial work. It is from this point, the proof of your doctrine, that you are to set out to triumph over the passions of your auditory, to strip the sinner of every subterfuge and excuse, that *conviction* may lead him to *repentance*. To produce this effect, leave your proofs and divisions behind you, and address yourself to the conscience in powerful interrogatories. Repeat nothing you have before said; you have now to produce a new effect, and must use a new language. Employ the utmost energy of your soul to show them that happiness is to be found nowhere but in God.—What should I say more? Forget method—forget art itself. Lift up your soul in an affectionate prayer to God,—become the intercessor for your auditory, that the multitude who withstood your menaces may be constrained to yield to the effusions of your love.”

LECTURE XXXII.

COMMENT.

“Every new author upon a subject, however little original in other respects, contributes some slight addition to the mass of probabilities.”—*Truths of Religion*, by James Douglas, Esq.*

THE general inadequacy of theories to effect the purposes contemplated by them has thrown their authors into considerable discredit, and the very name of a *theorist* connects with it little to the honour of his understanding. Whether a scheme be *originated* or only *revived*, it must therefore be examined solely by its practical results.

If the system does not *work well*, as the modern phrase is, but still contains in it much that promises to be beneficial to society, nothing can be more clearly a duty than the endeavour to find out the cause of this partial failure, and the application of the appropriate remedy. Perhaps some new power may be applied to make the scheme work better: if this can be done, all the better, for amendment is preferable to a total breaking up and abandonment; hence *reform* is the favourite theme of the day.

The plan laid down and recommended by Claude for the due regulation

* This work, and its associate, “Errors Regarding Religion,” by the same esteemed author, are of very great value.

of public discourses appears to possess the elements of great usefulness. I have endeavoured, in the foregoing lectures, to exhibit this plan fairly, and have made some additions to it; and I have shown, I think, that it is, capable of improvement. But does our system of public preaching now require further reform? I answer, without hesitation, It does call for further reform; there is still something wanting, which must be supplied before it can be efficient, before we can hopefully look for a revival of religion. It is not learning, for learning has increased, till, like house-property, it has fallen in value; nor is it talent in the ministry, for talent goes a-begging; nor is it moral character, for this exists in the ministry to an extent that will bear comparison with former periods; nor is there, generally speaking, a departure from the purity of Christian doctrine, for just views of truth are the glory of our age, and are found where once they were lamentably deficient: there is also a fair attendance on gospel ordinances; but, alas! to an alarming degree, all this settles in little better than mere formality. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; and this, if lost, must be restored. Defect in preaching does exist. The testimony of Dr. Fletcher bears strongly upon this point. In his excellent Sermon on a Revival of Religion, lately published, he says, "I shrink not from the avowal, solemn and affecting as is the responsibility which I feel in making it, that a careless, inadequate, unimpressive, or, on any great points, defective ministration of divine truth, is, of all other causes, most conducive to a declining state of things in the church of God; and that indifference, error, worldly conformity, and other indications of declension, are closely connected with the tone and character of ministerial instruction." Dr. Fletcher has not been contradicted. The Doctor's remarks refer not to the publication of error, nor of ignorance in publishing the truth, but to something wanting to give due advantage to the Gospel. And, if all the rules given for raising the character of sermons were observed and acted upon, still the complaint would remain. Every friend of divine truth will say that *the unction of the Holy Spirit* is wanting in a fuller degree than has been in our times yet experienced, to give life and energy to the preacher, to affect the hearts of the hearers, and to accomplish that which learning and correct rules never can, even in such a measure as we in our times may expect, and which is comprehended in the promise, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." This is equivalent to saying, "I will, by my Spirit, ever be with you, to assist you in your work, and to impart such energy to my gospel that no opposing powers shall prevent its ultimate success." Hence, until the blessed Spirit shall again visit our churches with a richer effusion of his gracious influences, until ministers shall be baptized with an apostolic spirit, we must continue constant in prayer and supplication.

Let it never be forgotten by us that the ministry may have knowledge, learning, eloquence, and even piety, and yet be inefficient. "It is essential to an efficient ministry," as is very ably shown by Dr. Andrew Reed in his Charge to the Rev. J. Elliot, of Bury St. Edmund's, "that there should be a *spiritual and powerful perception of the truth,—a predominant regard for the divine glory*, existing with the absorbing power of a ruling passion, teaching him to forget himself, to deny himself, to sacrifice himself for God, and to be happy in so doing,—a *yearning compassion for men*, as guilty and miserable through sin,—a *living and abiding sense of responsibility*,—deep emotion,—and a *fixed and humble dependence on the grace and Spirit of God*."

The observations of our author, in illustrating the necessity of *deep emotion* in order to the efficient ministration of the word of life are so excellent, and so much to our present purpose, that I must beg leave to introduce the substance of them, which will also answer the purpose of recommending the work to your attention :—

“By emotion I do not mean a forced physical excitement. There are many speakers who have inadequate views of the important truths they utter, and whose affections have little sympathy with them, who nevertheless *task* themselves to be animated and striking, that they may be acceptable and popular, as though any man were truly eloquent, by *trying* to be so ! The effect is that they overstep the ‘the modesty of nature,’ and do violence to taste and reason. In *trying* to be forcible they are extravagant; in *labouring* to be pathetic they whine and whimper; and in *striving* to feel they become turgid in the extreme. There is a great deal of vociferation, and besides it, nothing. Such service is of very questionable efficacy.

“Nor, by emotion, do I refer, with commendation, to that softness of nature which disposes an individual to undue sensibility, and even to tears, on slight occasion and on trivial subjects. This is *mere weakness*; and sensible weakness in the minister can never give power to his ministrations.

“Finally, by emotion I do not understand those occasional and sudden gusts of real but animal feeling into which some speakers work themselves, and which spring from no *sufficient* cause and defy all control of judgment and reason. To command others we must command ourselves. It must be felt that thought rises with passion, and that we are never so truly rational as when we are deeply impassioned.

“By emotion I refer to that *deep earnestness* of the soul which is created by the truth *strongly perceived* and *entirely believed*, and the consequent *quick and holy sympathy* of all the affections with the word the minister has to deliver, and the *circumstances* in which he is placed. Such emotion, evidently, would indicate neither weakness nor wildness. It would be in keeping with the subject; and, appearing only where it was demanded, its presence would be life and power. It would suggest the just action; it would give the just intonation; it would create the just expression. Every thing would speak, and speak eloquently, and would carry to the conscience of the hearer that conviction of sincerity and power in the speaker which nothing else could supply.

“Now our proposition is, that this emotion of the heart is not only proper but *indispensable* to the work of the ministry, so that should a person, either from physical or spiritual causes, have his affections in so dull and obtuse a state as not to allow of a corresponding feeling with the truth to be uttered, he is *disqualified* for the high and important service. He would fail to produce a belief in the truth of his message on the minds of those who heard him; he would fail to produce even the conviction that he himself believed it.

“He would fail, in the first instance, to produce belief of the truth *in those who heard him*. Let us look at this. He is a messenger from God to man, and on the highest interests. He is to make him sensible that he has broken the righteous laws of his Maker, that he is under sentence of condemnation for his offence, and that the sentence recorded against him subjects him to the forfeiture of life and happiness, both in this world and that which is to come. He is to know that this fearful sentence is sus-

pended, at the will of his Maker, that there may be place for an act of grace on the part of God and space for repentance on the part of the sinner. The preacher is to announce this grace as it is unfolded in the pity, the humility, the tears, the death of the Son of God for his sake. He is to beseech him to accept this message by faith, sustained as it is by the highest credentials, to rejoice in a display of infinite mercy which provides for him the only escape from the wrath to come, and to commit himself and his interests into the hands of that Saviour who has borne all, suffered all, for him.

"But, strange as it may seem, he does not listen, or, listening, he does not obey. His mind is darkened by sin; his heart is occupied by the world; he is little affected by the glories or terrors of the life to come; and he prefers to gratify his ease, his pleasure, or his pride. Conviction, indeed, often startles him in his apathy; but he allays it by a thousand excuses and pretences, all of which only mean that he is unwilling to accept a method of mercy which forbids him alike either to sin or to boast.

"In this state of cherished insensibility and unbelief he has remained, against all entreaty, for weeks, and months, and years. Meantime his life, which is but a thread, is wearing away, his day of grace is hastening to its close, and there is every reason to fear that, through his own perversity, it will only aggravate his doom.

"Once more he is to be tried. The preacher stands up in his place to repeat a message which has been too often rejected. He is surrounded by the realities of eternity. God, the judge of all, especially his judge, is present to mark his fidelity. He is to utter words which will be a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. Two worlds—the world above and the world below—are interested spectators. His eye falls on the individual whom he would persuade and save. He is his *fellow-man*, perhaps his *friend*; ready, perhaps, to do any thing for him, but refuses to honour and accept his message. He makes his appeal. For any thing he can tell, it may be the last occasion on which it shall be made. He may never more repeat it. His hearer may never more listen to it. Oh, if he should reject it—he is lost, for ever lost, and demons shriek with horrid exultation! Oh, if he repent and accept it—he is saved, saved, for ever saved, and angels rejoice over the soul that was lost and is saved.

"Was ever man placed in such affecting circumstances in relation to his fellow-man! Is it not an impossibility to remain unmoved, or slightly moved, on such occasion! Suppose it *possible* to fulfil such a service with coldness and indifference, would it not, more than any thing, take reality from the truth, and dispose the hearer to adjudge it 'a cunningly-devised fable!'

"More than this: the preacher without emotion would fail, as we have remarked, to produce a conviction that *he himself believed* the things he uttered. It is a common law of our nature to be affected and moved by truth and by circumstances in proportion as we believe their importance. If a culprit could hear the sentence of death without emotion, or if the judge could utter it without solemn emotion, would you not consider that they had made themselves less than human? If a stranger should approach you with leisurely step, and with placid look, and in measured phrases should inform you that your dwelling was in flames, and suggest that you

had better look to it, would you believe him? And why not? Simply because his *manner* denied his *statement*.

"And here, brethren, is the fault of our ministry. Time was, and it has not wholly passed away, in which an earnest ministry was decried as vulgar, ignorant, and methodistical. He was deemed to be the fashionable, the intellectual, the polished preacher, who read what he wrote, who shunned emotion as he would an adversary, and who clothed himself with an indifference which, by courtesy, was pronounced philosophical and rational. Mistaken men! No delusion has worked so fatally on the ministry! It has induced men to regard religion itself as a mere affair of state, its ministers as mere stipendiaries. In announcing the Gospel, they are considered to be only fulfilling their vocation, and in all their service to be *doing duty*, or, in other terms, to be *acting a part*, which they cannot deem to be of spiritual and eternal importance.

"Do you ask for instances in illustration? It would really be to divide the whole ministry, whether past or present, into two classes—the frigid and the fervent,—and to adduce them relatively as examples of failure or success. The frigid, whatever otherwise might be its advantages, would be found to fail; and the fervent, whatever its infirmities and errors, would be found to succeed. Of course we refer not to an *affected fervour*; of all frigid things it is the most frigid. And, if we speak of real earnestness with attendant *disadvantages*, it is merely in compliance with the common impression; but our full belief is that, as true emotion has the advantage of success on its side, so, in fact, it has commonly every other advantage. It not only involves a more generous and healthy action of the affections, but greater force of mind, juster conceptions of the truth, better knowledge of mankind, and deeper benevolence of soul.

"Hear Baxter, the apostle of his time, exclaim indignantly, 'Shall we preach a living gospel with a *lifeless* manner!' Hear Augustine, the effects of whose mind and labours are visible on the church to this day, declare that he was satisfied with no discourse unless it brought himself and his hearers to tears. Hear Paul, the prince of preachers, say, 'By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, *with tears*.' O those tears—those manly tears—what power was in them! They tell you that his soul is noble *throughout*, that the energies of his heart rival those of his head, that what he sees more clearly than any man he feels more profoundly, that his whole being is elevated and consecrated by the solemnities of his work.

"Then look to a more than earthly example; listen to Him 'who spoke as never man spake.' Was there ever an instance of such deep emotion, such habitual earnestness, the fires of which were consuming him, and by which he was willing to be consumed? Was there ever known such majesty of carriage, such solemnity of rebuke, such dissolving pathos, such sublimity of thought and of speech, as pervaded his ministry? And why? Just because he was the *incarnation* of truth, and truth had found, for the first time, a divine, yet human, medium, through which she might express herself in all her divine qualities to man—in all her light and love, her power and grandeur!"

Where this deep emotion is felt, the preacher will adopt a *language* the most likely to impress the heart. We need not throw off the aids of learning for enriching the mind, but we must also find a language that will seize the affections, the passions, and the senses of the audience. Exposi-

tions, propositions, with their auxiliaries and adjuncts, constitute the machinery of the understanding ; but there is a peculiar language which opens the avenues of the heart. The Christian character stands out fairly before us when it is seen not as a religion of the head merely, nor of the heart merely, but a happy combination of both ; and whenever we see a want of this combination we see to a certainty an imperfect character, which in many instances may be traced to imperfect or defective preaching.

The kind of language to be contended for is to be found in the sacred scriptures, and in the works of men who have most closely followed the divine method. The careful study of the scriptures, with a direct view to the subject of this Lecture, will satisfy any man that he who formed the heart was acquainted with the avenues of it. There is no language that distils into the heart like scripture language ; it has a point and address which words fail to describe : the language is aided by circumstances which gave occasion to the language, so that we have the fittest time, the fittest means, the fittest words. In Nathan's interview with David, after his unhappy fall, you have a fine exemplification of this, as also in the prophet Daniel when standing before Belshazzar : in both instances you see how the circumstances aided the strong language of the messenger of God. There is also, as I have said, a strength of language to be found in human authors, at least in some of them, as well as in some pulpits, exceedingly well calculated to strike the heart with the force of truth. This is matter of fact ; and, when we are looking for a revival of religion, we must look to these resources for language to promote such a revival.

With regard to the printed works of Christian divines, I would especially refer to the "land of revivals," America. I ask, Is not the powerful language of Davies and Payson calculated to affect the heart ? Have not these and men of kindred spirits done much in effecting such revivals ? These points must be conceded. To come nearer home, I might refer to Walker of Edinburgh, and South in our own land, with many others. Here we have patterns before us, while scripture will be always at hand to supply any thing in which they may happen to have been deficient. Such men as I have referred to had in them the very elements of *comment*—strong feeling, delicate sensibility, and both united with a sound judgment. Of South, indeed, we must say that he was too much a party man, that he laboured under strong prejudices against the Puritans, and that we should therefore read him with caution ; with these allowances, he was a giant in language, and that without the aid of Græcisms, Latinisms, or any other disfigurements of style, all which, like a true descendant of the bold Saxon race, he despised. Walker, in his own country, was a prodigy : he seems to have drank deeply into the spirit of his countryman, John Knox, though he was more polite by two hundred years ; and, while the great body of his countrymen were actively engaged in cultivating the understanding, he undertook a task, equally arduous, by the language of power to raise the soul to action, and by his own deep and hallowed feelings to stir up those of his hearers. Blair learned something from Walker—the best parts of his sermons are his imitations of Walker ; but being destitute of that deep spiritual emotion, that baptism with the Holy Ghost as with fire, which distinguished Walker, of course there is little correspondence in this respect in their writings ; yet there is a borrowed excellence in Blair, which is of some value. I make this last remark to encourage young preachers to the closest imitation of such excellent men. Let them earnestly aim to cultivate the eloquence of the heart.

If the Spirit's work is with the heart as well as the understanding—if "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul"—will he not be most likely to co-operate with such language from the preacher as is best fitted to the purpose? And, if the gracious Spirit move towards a people by the intimation of his love, may we not suppose that he will move the preacher towards them in the same way? Thus the apostles went forth, "preaching every where," no doubt in the heartfelt language which they had learned from their Master, and we are informed, "the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word with signs following," Mark xvi. 20.

In accordance with these views the people will go where they can be affected, where they can be made to feel. Though such assaults on the heart, to those who are completely wedded to sin and are determined to go after their idols, may be unpleasant, yet even such persons will go again and again; they may indeed say, "The man speaks parables; he is speaking of some other persons, and not of us;" still, I say, they will hear such addresses, and will repeat their visits even in spite of themselves. Great numbers of persons who are in the habit of attending on the ministry of the word are incapable of appreciating elegant composition—they are not intellectual enough to taste an intellectual feast; but they will go where they can be powerfully affected, where the preacher chooses acceptable words that harmonize with their feelings, that touch the tender strings of their hearts, that melt or burn,—where they can hear something that will recal the thoughts of their hearts, and lay them open to view, though long forgotten,—where the preacher, from his acquaintance with the workings of the human heart, is enabled to disclose things which they supposed to be known only to themselves. Such preaching attracts the many; and the impulse gains strength from the numbers that go to the same place, and, so far as attention is secured, something is accomplished. But this is not all: the people may be expected to lay to heart the faithful remonstrances and the occasional severity of a man whose warm and urgent manner displays the earnestness and deep emotion of his soul; while they would not bear reproof from a mere official declaimer. Convinced that the preacher has in view their eternal welfare, they will say, "Master, say on;" the reprover will afterwards "find more favour than he that flatters with his tongue," Prov. xxviii. 23.

Add to all these considerations the example of Christ. His language concentrated in it every thing that could engage the attention and improve the heart. See his Sermon on the Mount, his Discourse at Nazareth, &c., and mark his energetic language to the Jews, John v., vi., vii. Every thing he said, and every thing he did, was calculated to move as well as to teach, to correct as well as to inform.

In short, pungent language, like powerful medicines, can alone produce the desired effect upon the decayed mental and moral constitution of men: there must be something to produce "searchings of heart." Thus the roused spirit of man becomes as "the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly," or soul, Prov. xx. 27.

An able writer on the other side of the Atlantic, speaking of the ministry needed at the present time, very justly observes, "Ministers are too much inclined to prosecute one undeviating method of doing things. This is well within certain limits. But it is carried too far. It goes often into the

business of preaching, and imparts dullness to the efforts for winning souls to Christ. The sermons are sound, full of thought, replete with instruction, all adjusted in logical order and with rhetorical skill. Every part is placed as the book directs, and the whole is constructed with the accuracy of the square and compass. When completed, they are elaborate and noble sermons; but, when delivered, somehow or other they fail in doing Christ's work on the souls of men. On this point much remains to be learned. As yet, but little is known about it. We want men who will study the matter—and not leave it till they learn the style of thought and address, of illustration and language—which will go most directly into plain men's bosoms, and who, when they learn, will condescend to use it. True, it will cost the sacrifice of some scholarly notions, the yielding of some stately words and well-turned periods, the withering of some flowers, and the defacing of some beauties. It may even cost, in some respects, rebellion against the authority of rule, and the despotism of books. But preachers must do it, if they would do good to the population that is now taking its turn to live on this globe. We are not pleading for a wild and ranting eccentricity, nor for a debasing of truth by vulgar admixtures; but for a sound, well-disciplined common sense, to guide in the establishing of its position and in the pressure of its appeals. Men, at the present day, will not be converted by philosophy, nor by fine writing, nor by graceful speaking. These are good in their place; but the gospel, thrown into a living form of pungency and power, is better than the whole of them. Ministers must take the naked gospel, and go forth, and preach Jesus Christ, the atonement, and eternity, to busy men, with the same tact and earnestness with which these men preach the world in the heat of a bargain.

"Let there then be more fervent men raised up among us; not shallow, noisy men, but deep as well as rapid, men of light as well as heat, of vigorous logic as well as glowing passion. 'Eloquence,' said one who is a practitioner in the matter, 'is logic set on fire.' This is what is wanted to melt and burn away the empire of Satan. We want both the logic and the fire, strong, intense, ready men, who can make a sermon at any time, any where, any how,—who have knowledge, and can use it,—who have souls, and can throw them out, and throw out with them truth in heavy, glowing masses, in just such order and shape as will come with most power to the souls that are in the way of it. Said Rowland Hill to his Welsh curate, 'Never mind breaking grammar, if you can only break hearts.' We do not advocate a propensity to blunder, accuracy is far better; but there is much good sense in this direction. It means that ministers must risk something if they would ever *be* any thing or ever *do* any thing. After they have piled up their shining stores of knowledge, and they cannot pile them too high, let them impregnate the mass with the fires of holy passion, throw away the shackles of a timorous and benumbing restraint, in faith and prayer commit themselves to God, go forth and do good as circumstances require, and as fast as they can."

I am fully aware that the kind of address for which I am pleading will, by some, be censured. If it sting, it will be called declamation; if it touch the tender feelings of the heart, it will be called cant, a play upon the feel-

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ings of weak-minded people ; and it is well if the preacher do not either obtain the appellation of hypocrite, or, on the other hand, get himself denounced as a caricaturist, a severe ascetic fellow, a libeller of human nature, a man of many words but no meaning. Well, be it so ; but, if preachers do not speak to the heart, the scripture will do it, and the day of judgment will confirm every faithful word ; and, if the privileges and enjoyments of those who through grace have believed are not to be expiated upon in language calculated to penetrate the heart, it is likely we shall soon settle again into a sleepy state, and shall only be awaked when calamity approaches or death stares us in the face.

As a means of raising the standard of preaching, that it may not be the mere lullaby of a sleepy audience, I recommend the study of *comment*, as well calculated to give force and energy to thought ; to transfuse breath into sermons, that they may live, that they may be replete with light and heat, that they may be as a hammer breaking the rocky hearts in pieces ; or like the "sharp two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Under such sermons, sinners will be led to cry out, "What must we do to be saved ?" the sorrowful and contrite spirit will be comforted, the Saviour will be set forth in his glorious offices and grace, and the feet of the weary wanderer will be directed into the "paths of wisdom," which are "pleasantness and peace."

That my meaning may not be misapprehended, it may perhaps be needful to define the sense in which the term *comment* is used in this Lecture. *Commentum*, whence it is derived, is an old word transferred to new purposes. According to the old Latin dictionary it signifies "a device, a fiction, a feigned story." Strange as it may appear, the fathers of the church adopted the word, but changed its signification, applying it to an *exposition* of the scriptures, or *annotations* upon them. Blackstone calls his *Dissertations on the Laws of England* "Commentaries." Of late years the word comment has been adopted at the bar and in the senate for the *strong expression of feeling or sentiment* in reference to any matter, and in this sense our daily political publications have availed themselves of it in expressing their approbation or disapprobation of public men and public measures. This, therefore, is the sense in which I employ it. It is certainly curious to observe, in the history of a word, what changes take place, as well as in the general style of our country. It seems a strange anomaly for 'comment' to come round to what it is, from what it once was. Just so with the word *watering-place*. When I was young it meant a place where we watered our horses ; now it signifies a place of dissipation, where the idle gentry and foolish trades-people go to spend their money and learn new vices. However, usage has given a sanction to the modern use of the word comment, and we shall take considerable liberty with it, agreeably to the ideas thrown out in my introduction to the present article. It will serve as the root of a vine, the various branches of which we can train to our liking in all directions, and which we hope will be both fruitful and ornamental. We could not take a name from any of its branches, because it would be inadequate, though most pleasing to our usual ideas. The word will soon become familiar. It is only necessary to separate our ideas of it in general from *exposition*, *explication*, and every similar term. But, as there is no rule without exception, even exposition may, if so designed,

be conducted in the manner of comment, as I shall illustrate hereafter by examples.

To explain the term still further, let it be observed that every thing in morals and religion has its right and wrong. Every sentiment may fall into truth or error. Every thing possesses certain characteristic qualities. Every speaker that feels intensely for the divine honour has here a "message from God" to speak, whether in censure or approbation. The speaker's mind, in meditating a comment, fixes itself on such qualities or properties, and, making the subject his own, he calls together all the strongest expressions that his intense feelings can summon for the occasion, taking care at the same time to compare such qualities of actions or sentiments with the word of God; attending, above all things, to what the scriptures say as the rule of his speech.

The qualities of things contained in the sacred volume are all subject to the influence of comment in some of its kinds: the field is thus as wide as the world, as expansive as that divine truth which is "settled in the heavens." It is the expression of impassioned sentiments and the pathos of the mind. Comment assumes every kind of form, just as occasion requires—the cheerful and the grave, the indulgent and the severe, the commendatory and the indignant, the argumentative and the contemplative—carrying the language with point and effect to every case. Though simple in itself, it mostly requires the elements of representation or narration to bring it to bear upon its point. Instance the striking address of Joseph to his brethren, which I call pure comment: "But, as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Again, the expression of Esau on the conduct of Jacob: "Is he not rightly called Jacob? for he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing." It is the power of eloquence; it is the final touch of the artist's pencil. The outline must first be traced (the stating of the subject), the lights and shades are to be marked (definition and description); still something is wanting; the skilful artist then throws in his natural colouring, and does that for the picture which judicious comment does for the discourse—gives it *expression and effect*. So Mr. Fletcher of Madeley says, in his portraiture of St. Paul: "The essence of painting consists in a happy disposition of light and shade, from the contrast of which an admirable effect is produced, and the animated figure is made to rise from the canvass." Comment is not a mere invention, but it agrees with the experience of every age and every nation: and, what is most to the point, it is sanctioned by the scriptures of truth, and is well calculated to affect the mind, to restrain or to urge forward in reference to divine things, as the preacher's duty and good sense may dictate.

The language of comment has also the singular recommendation of being both classical and popular. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is classical but not popular; Robert Hall is profound and reasoning, but not popular—he requires a mind as capacious as his own to comprehend him fully: but comment has a superscription on which all understand, and which all are glad to call their own. It carries its direct appeal alike to the understanding and to the conscience. It brings light and conviction; it animates or soothes; and shows the very form and feature of things, as to what is odious or amiable, advantageous or baneful. It throws off all disguises; it exalts what should

be exalted, and debases what should be laid prostrate in the dust. It is just that kind of language in which the preacher who possesses the requisite qualifications for efficiency, already referred to, will throw his whole soul into the bosom of the hearer. It commands all things, but submits to nothing. It supersedes no other kind of excellence in public speaking, but assists every one of them. Whatever peculiarity of talent the preacher may possess, this will impress additional value upon its exercise. In short, it is always great in itself; it has a dignity that none will dispute, and a range of operations as wide as the feelings of human nature extend. It brings the speaker into association with all that is excellent in the pulpit, at the bar, and in the senate.

As the holy scriptures are full of all excellence, they stand pre-eminent for the justest comment, and the facts recorded in the evangelical history, and in the Acts of the Apostles, fully show its potency. When Paul reasoned, or *commented*, before Felix, the guilty judge trembled. When Peter commented upon the vile conduct of Simon Magus, the wretch cried for mercy. When the same Apostle commented upon the wickedness of the Jews in crucifying the Prince of Life, three thousand were cut to the heart. It is true, all gracious and saving effects are to be attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit; but it is agreeable to the divine appointment that human means should be employed, and, of all the means that can be brought to bear on this point, that of striking and forcible comment is one of the most efficient.

From such a representation of the subject, some will be ready to suppose that there are insurmountable difficulties in this branch of their work. If only great men have been successful here, how shall inferiors hope? If, however, you possess strong Christian feeling, and a holy zeal for the honour of your Master and the interests of his kingdom, all the difficulty will soon be overcome. Powerful feeling will produce powerful language. In the late political struggle for a Reformed Parliament, how did every one, from the highest to the lowest grade of society, express the liveliest interest either for or against that measure! When any one sustains an injury, how readily and forcibly he expresses his sentiments! nay, even the gentler sex, who occupy not pulpits, can sometimes be very eloquent and powerful when deeply interested and highly excited. How, then, shall it be difficult for the Christian minister to assume a style and language becoming his situation as an advocate in the cause of truth and an ambassador of the King of kings?

Of all the matters that relate to what we denominate *direct address* to the audience, *comment* is the most appropriate. It is the very "form and feature" of personality, not in the offensive sense of the term, but in that of *direct contact*, bringing the speaker and the hearer into close quarters (as the sailors term it), not with a design to injure, but to assist and edify those who are willing to be instructed. So Nicodemus was brought into close contact with the blessed Redeemer in the conversation recorded in the third chapter of John.

In several parts of this work I have referred to the subject of Comment, and have endeavoured to show its specific uses and applications; but I scarcely know of any kind of pulpit address in which it might not take its part with certain success; for, whatever dish (to employ a homely comparison) is brought to table, there should be appropriate seasoning. Now if,

to obtain this, we must travel to foreign climes (though I hope this is not absolutely necessary), I would not send you to Germany, already ruined, in a religious view, by a system of false emanative philosophy ; nor to the phlegmatic Dutch, nominally more orthodox as to *doctrine*, but cold as their icy waters ; * but I must send you to the United States, of which we have heard so much on the subject of revivals, and so much that is cheering and delightful, after every abatement which the strictest propriety may demand. Revivals there were the fruits of an energetic ministry. There the pattern is before us. Our younger brother Jonathan outstrips his elder brother John, and leaves a space between that tells a tale which perhaps we do not like to hear ; yet, I say, if we can learn any thing from the western side of the Atlantic, let us not be sullen in wrong, but endeavour to correct our errors by their example. We will cherish a holy emulation with America. Their zeal shall not totally eclipse ours. " Britain, with all thy faults I love thee still ? " Thy stars have been obscured by a dense atmosphere, but they shall shine forth again with increased lustre ; thy ministers shall resume a tone of power and influence suited to thy exigency. Some more talented author than he who now assumes the task shall strike out a more direct path of improvement ; and we will not cease to pray that God, " the Father of light," will vouchsafe to such well-directed efforts his special blessing. We will not cease to pray, " Thy kingdom come,"—to entreat that the " Spirit may be poured on us from on high,"—and that, as the result, the " wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Let it be further observed that comment may find a place in any part of a discourse, and sometimes in every part. For instance, I might expound John iii. 19 : " This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light," &c. I might give the meaning of this figurative language, and of the terms employed. I might prove the truth of the text by matter of fact, and afterwards confirm the statements by parallel passages of scripture, and by reference to scripture history. But here comment might be introduced, and I might express my own feelings and sentiments about it, remarking that it is a most censurable and abhorrent perversity of human nature to contemn the light so graciously bestowed, and be determined to go to hell in the dark, to hazard all that is dear and valuable by adhering to the most evil deeds, &c. Now, if I express no such feelings and sentiments of my own, to whatever length I may go in explaining and amplifying, though to as many sermons as would fill a volume, it would be *comparatively* labour lost ; but the proper introduction of comment would give unspeakable advantage to such a discourse ; and it is owing to the absence of this necessary ingredient that so many sermons, otherwise excellent, fail to produce on the audience any adequate effect. The division of a sermon may be elegant, and its enlargement just, yet there are other excellences to be introduced to entitle it to the meed of

* [The good author in all probability knew little of either German or Dutch authors. Since he wrote, however, we have had such an influx from Germany of true and holy thought into our literature in translations of the works of Neander, Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Nitzsch, Olshausen, Eichard, Lange, Dorner, Müller, Baumgarten, Stier, Besser, &c., that his remarks are startlingly inapplicable. When referring to the Dutch, it is highly probable he knew nothing of the rich and beautiful commentaries on the whole scriptures of Cocceius, which are certainly the opposite of 'cold.' Nothing produced in America surpasses these writers.]

unqualified praise. By means of comment the truth or falsehood, justice or injustice, reasonableness or absurdity, dignity or meanness, suitability or incongruity, of any sentiment or action, is to be exhibited with appropriate light and shade. In short, whatever is lovely or unlovely, excellent or odious, dignified or contemptible, furnishes a proper opening for the expression of our feelings of delight or detestation, admiration or astonishment, &c.

When comment is intended to occupy a conspicuous place, there must be a preparation for it, and the ideas of the sermon must be raised for such admissions. For instance, in Jay's sermon on Amos vi. 1,* the plan of separately noticing the different characters who are at ease in Zion, and the causes of their false security, furnishes a complete preparation for the comments that he designed, and every point is indicated in a manner admirably suited to his purpose.

Indeed, nothing is more common than for authors to raise a subject for no other purpose than to introduce comment. For instance, the History of England has by several been written with the express view of commending or reprobating parties and leaders of parties, or their opinions and sentiments in relation to governments, whether of the monarchical or popular kind. The lives of popular characters have been written, and imaginary ones introduced, with the same design. In all these cases, authors dress up their characters to their own taste, and comment upon them accordingly. They hold up *these* to admiration, *those* to contempt. In this view of the subject, we see a man may be a benefactor of mankind or a mischievous demon. With this powerful auxiliary, the Christian minister will be as an angel of light—the mirror of truth and rectitude. He will “set down naught in malice.” Christian charity will direct every sentence, and the glory of God and the benefit of man will be the result.

The nature and value of comment will however be better understood by the following examples, and all that I can say in its praise is but holding a dim taper to the unclouded light of the sun.

According to the design of comment, it is of two general kinds, eulogistic and dislogistic.†

EULOGISTIC COMMENT.

My first example is from Owen, who thus comments on the holy scriptures :—

Some find fault with the scriptures because divine truths are not thrown together in regular order as in our catechisms. But God puts not such value on men's accurate methods as they imagine them to deserve. Nor are they subservient to his ends in the revelation of himself, as they are apt to fancy. Yet often when they think they have brought truths into the strictest propriety of expression and order, they lose both their power and their glory. Hence is the world filled with so many lifeless, sapless, graceless, artificial declarations of divine truth, in the schoolmen and others. We may sooner squeeze water out of a pumice stone than one drop of spiritual nourishment out of them. How many millions of souls have received divine benefit and consolation exactly suited to their condition by those occasional occurrences of divine truth which they meet with in the scriptures, and which they would never have obtained by those wise artificial arrangements which some men would fancy! Truths have their efficacy

* See p. 147 of this volume.

† See Bailey's Dictionary on the preposition *dis*. “It generally denotes a negation or privation of the noun or verb simply taken, as *dis-join*.” Hence our use of the word dislogistic as meaning the reverse of eulogistic, or *dispraise*.

and power in our minds, not only from themselves, but from their *place* and *position* in the scriptures. They are placed in such respects towards us, and in such connexion one with another, as their influence upon our minds depends on. Artificial methodizing of spiritual truths may make men ready in notions, cunning and subtle in disputation; but it is the scripture itself in its own present arrangement "which is able to make us wise unto salvation."*

The same author on the incomparable simplicity of scriptural divinity.

When we read human authors we are sometimes bewildered in the multiplicity of words. There is a lucid perspicuity in the Bible. Here we see divine truth clearly. The light shines bright and full. "*Whatever maketh manifest is light,*" and the holy scripture is like a great flood of pure light poured forth on a dark world, and the true source of its illumination and glory. You have often the sublime, but all is the eloquence of simplicity, the grandeur of sentiment and not of mere words. How wonderful is the simplicity of our Lord's character and discourses!—There are no syllogisms, or corollaries drawn with subtle art, to perplex and puzzle the mind; but there are throughout sublime truths, adapted alike to instruct and edify, exalt and purify—calculated to improve the lowest intellect and to exercise the highest.

An example of still more direct comment we have in Walker on Rom. viii. 32: "God spared not his own Son."

Amazing words! The God in whom we live and move—the Father of our spirits and the former of our bodies, who possessed an eternity of happiness and glory before we began to exist, and can neither be enriched by our services nor impoverished by the want of them,—he whose goodness we abused by the vilest ingratitude, whose omnipotence we defied by the most insolent rebellion,—even *that God* who spared not the angels that sinned, but has reserved them in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day, vouchsafed to pity and to spare the children of men; nay, to make way for the exercise of this distinguishing mercy, he spared not his own Son, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the worlds; but having substituted him in our place, clothed him with our nature, and laid upon him the iniquities of us all, he delivered him up to contempt and persecution, to agony and torture, to death and the grave; and all this for our benefit, to redeem us from everlasting misery and to restate us in the happiness and glory we had forfeited. These are some of the marvellous doings of the Lord, which the apostle here celebrates with gratitude and wonder, as the grounds of our faith, and hope, and joy.

Dr. S. Clarke on Acts xi. 24: "For he was a good man," &c.

I can conceive of no higher eulogium than is expressed in these words. Nothing in nature is more amiable than the character of a truly good man, a man whose principal business and pleasure is to make all men easy with whom he has any concern in the present life, and to promote, as far as in him lies, their happiness likewise in that which is to come. Other qualifications have their value, and do, in their proportion, merit a just degree of esteem. Great knowledge and abilities every where necessarily command respect. Great actions never fail to fill men with admiration, and to procure applause. But of all characters that of *goodness* is the most lovely, and approaches nearest to the similitude of a divine perfection. God is the fountain of goodness, from which flows all the happiness in the whole creation; and there is no one perfection in the divine nature which it is so much our duty and our glory to imitate.

In commenting upon the excellences of good men you must be on your guard lest you exceed the just bounds of truth and soberness; but when the works of God in creation, providence, or grace, are the subjects of your comment, no caution of this kind is needed; our sentiments and feelings, when expressed in the strongest manner, will here fall infinitely short of the truth. A pious mind will often break forth in this kind of comment. Hence the many instances contained particularly in the Psalms—see viii. 3, 4, &c.; xxxi. 19; xlv., lxxv., lxxxiv., xc., xcii., cxxxix., &c. The works of Romaine abound with specimens, from which the following soliloquy is selected:—

* Owen on the Spirit.

Meditate, O my soul! upon the wonders which divine love has wrought for thee and thy salvation. Review the many, many mercies of thy past life; and consider that thou art called to walk this day with *thy* God. What a privilege is this! He is thy God, and thou art his adopted son. What an honour has he conferred on thee! he has taken thee into the most noble family, yea, into the divine household of faith. He has permitted thee to walk with him as thy father. He has appointed the way, promised to be with thee in it, and at every moment, and at every step, to be doing thee good. There can be no happiness superior to this upon the earth. Prize it, for it is inestimable: enjoy it, for it is heaven begun. Walking with God by faith is present enjoyment of him, and will infallibly bring thee to the end of thy journey, to full and everlasting enjoyment.*

The preacher will have great occasion and many opportunities of introducing comments of this class, and that of Walker on Rom. viii. 32. Sacred poesy furnishes an immense variety here. There is a beautiful instance in Milton's fifth book, which is fresh in the memory of most people as the song of our first parents in Paradise, while yet in innocence:—

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable! who sittest above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.
Speak, ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels, for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing: ye in heaven,
On earth, join all ye creatures, to extol
Him first, him last, him midst, and without end.

When a preacher recites one or more of such passages, in a suitable part of his discourse, he adds a jewel of great value, but this practice is sometimes carried to excess.

Davies on 1 John iv. 8, after a good description of the qualities of love, and referring to the declaration of the inspired apostle that "God is love," introduces expostulation and comment.

Love is a gentle, pleasing theme, the noblest passion of the human breast, and the purest ornament of rational nature. Love is the cement of society and source of social happiness; and without it the great community of the rational universe would dissolve, and men and angels would become savages, and roam apart in barbarous solitude. Love is the spring of every pleasure; for who would take pleasure in the possession of what he dares not love? Love is the foundation of religion and morality; for what is more monstrous than religion without love to that God who is the object of it? Who can perform social duties without feeling the endearments of those relations to which they belong? Love is the softener and polisher of human minds, and transforms barbarians into men; its pleasures are refined and delicate, and even its pains and anxieties have something in them soothing and pleasing. In a word, love is the brightest beam of divinity that has ever irradiated the creation, the nearest resemblance to the ever-blessed God, for "*God is love.*"

Let me, therefore, commence advocate for God with my fellow-men, though it strikes me with horror to think that there should be any occasion for it. You children of the most tender Father, you subjects of the most gracious and righteous Sovereign, you beneficiaries of Divine Love, why do you harbour hard thoughts of him? Is it because his laws are so strict, and tolerate you in no guilty pleasure? this appointment is the kind restraint of love: the love of so good a Being will not allow him to dispense with your observance of any thing that may in its own nature contribute to your improvement and advantage, nor indulge you in any thing that is in its own nature deadly and destructive, any more than a father will suffer a favourite child to play with a

* Romaine's Walk of Faith, chap. v.

viper, or a good government permit a man to roam at large armed with weapons to destroy himself and others. Do you think it hard of God, because he hates all moral evil to such a degree that he has annexed to it everlasting misery of the most exquisite kind?—you may as well complain of the constitution of nature that renders abstinence from poison necessary to the preservation of health, or that does not allow you to quench your thirst, in a fever, with cold water, &c.

South in expatiating on the divine goodness also mingles a good deal of comment :—

Look over the whole universe, and you shall find no part of it but hath its peculiar beauty and ornament. So that the Greek word *κοσμος*, which signifies the *world* signifies also dress and ornament, as if the world were nothing else but a great union and collection of all unions and perfections. The sun (the Psalmist tells us) comes every day dressed and adorned like a bridegroom out of his chambers ; he casts abroad a lustre too glorious to behold : it is enough that we can see it second-hand by reflection. Nor can the night itself conceal the glories of heaven ; but the moon and the stars, those deputed lights, then show forth their humbler beauties. And then, if we consider the earth and the sea, we shall find them, like two inexhaustible store-houses, exhibiting the riches of nature in boundless unmeasured plenty, a plenty ennobled by two excellences—fulness and regularity ; so that the whole system of the world is but a standing copy and representation of the divine goodness, writing little images of itself upon every part and portion of this great page.

To proceed further, to plants and vegetables, which have a little higher advance of perfection, and enjoy something like life, that is, something that is enough to make them grow and flourish. “*Consider the lilies*” (says our Saviour), *how they grow ; they toil not ; they spin not ; and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*” We read in the 30th verse of God’s clothing the grass. We see the lilies in the gayest livery of the great Lord, all the blessed influences of heaven and earth concurring to preserve and freshen their beauty ; and thus, by the tender mercies of the great Father, there is not the least flower but seems to hold up its head and look pleasantly, in the secret sense of the goodness of its heavenly Maker. Even when these seem to perish, or wither and die, and at last bury themselves in the bowels of the same earth that bore them, the same providence vouchsafes them a resurrection and a return to life—securing perpetuity, succession in the exactest order of the first creation, and thereby giving them some resemblance of an immortality, so far as the properties of their nature will admit.

Or if we look to the sensible part of the creation, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, we shall find them, the chief and the strongest of them, constant retainers and pensioners of heaven. Even the lion seeks his meat from God, Ps. civ. 31. We see every creature possessed of a power most particularly to pursue that which makes for the welfare of its being. Where God denies strength, he usually gives sagacity and quickness of sense, and withal implants a certain instinct that searches and prompts it to make use of that faculty in which the chief ability is seated. The ox is sufficiently conscious of its horns, the mastiff of its teeth. The little bird has not strength to grapple with the hawk, but it has agility to escape him. The helpless lamb has neither strength nor wing, yet its great usefulness procures it protection from its owner.

Proceed we now one step further, and take a survey of rational creatures—men and angels. And first of man, who is (as it were) an epitome or rather an union of the two worlds, as by his body related to the earth and by his soul to heaven. Nothing can more declare the goodness of his Creator to him than that he made him *after his own image*.

But passing over the bounty of God to man in his state of innocence, as not sufficiently to be expressed by any since the loss of it, I shall remark only those blessings and favours which men, ever since the fall and apostasy of Adam, seem to enjoy upon the mere stock of the common blessings of Providence, which we find, as to all the outward materials of happiness, makes no discrimination between the good and the bad, but causes the sun and the rain to visit the vineyard as well when it is Ahab’s as when it was Naboth’s.

Scripture history and observation prove, independently of all improvement or misuse, that God is *good to all*, &c., that the benignity of Providence seems to be promiscuous and universal, and as undistinguishing as the elements, which equally dispense themselves to the necessities of all. We cannot but judge it an instance

of strange and almost invincible goodness for a prince to clothe his rebels in scarlet, and to make his traitors fare deliciously every day; yet the wicked and profane ones of the world, who stand in the same defiance of the majesty and supremacy of Heaven, are treated with as great obligingness and favour by him whom they so defy.

And besides, how many are the casual and unforeseen dangers that the hand of Providence rescues them from! how many little things carry in them the causes of death, and how often have men that have escaped been amazed that they were not destroyed! This shows that there is an eye that still watches over them, that always sees, though it is not seen, that knows their strength and their weaknesses, where they are safe and when they may be struck, and in how many respects they lie open to the invasion of sad accidents; and, though it be ten to one but in the space of a year or two a man may be so attacked by one or other of those many thousand casualties that he is obnoxious to, yet we see that most do escape, grow old, and do well. In a word, every one lives by a perpetual deliverance, which for the unlikelihood of it he could not expect, so, for his unworthiness, I am sure he could not deserve.

Among the scripture examples of Eulogistic Comment I may refer you to Exod. xv. 1—26; Deut. xxxii. xxxiii.; Judges v.; 1 Sam. ii. 2—9; 2 Sam. i. 17—27; 2 Sam. xxii.; Ps. viii. 1—9; xlv. 72.

Jay, in his Morning Exercises, vol. i., on John xiv. 18, speaking of the happiness to be derived from Christ, descants in a way of amplification and comment upon the characters which the Saviour sustains, &c.

The happiness we derive from creatures is like a beggar's garment—it is made up of pieces and patches, and is worth very little after all. But the blessedness we derive from the Saviour is single and complete. In him all fulness dwells. He is coeval with every period. He is answerable to every condition. He is a physician to heal, a counsellor to plead, a king to govern, a friend to sympathize, a father to provide. He is a foundation to sustain, a root to enliven, a fountain to refresh. He is a shadow from the heat, the bread of life, the morning star, the sun of righteousness—all, and in all. [This is the climax.] No creature can be a substitute for him; but he can supply the place of every creature. He is all my salvation and all my desire, my hope, my peace, my life, my glory, and joy. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart fail, but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." I cannot be exposed, I cannot be friendless, I cannot be poor, I cannot be fearful, I cannot be sorrowful—with thee.

The same author shows, in a very forcible manner, the iniquity and folly of ungodly men, by judiciously commenting, in a way of amplification, on the character and perfections of God. The text is Mal. iii. 8: "Will a man rob God?"

Is it possible? Is it possible? Can he be so *disingenuous*? What! rob a father, a friend, a benefactor! The best of all fathers! The kindest of all friends! The most generous of all benefactors! Can he also be so *daring*?—to rob a Being so high and sacred, and whose glory so enhances the offence! Can he be so *irrational*?—to rob a Being—not absent, for he never is absent; but in his presence—not in the night, but in the day; the darkness and light are both alike to him—not when he sees not, observes not, but while he is looking on, and *must* look on, for his eyes are upon all the ways of man and he ponders all his goings? Can he be so *desperate*?—to rob one who can, who will, punish, and whose punishment is not only unavoidable but intolerable? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Yet, says God—and he cannot be mistaken, or accuse unrighteously—"You have robbed me."

R. Walker,—on 1 Thess. iii. 8, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord,"—takes occasion to comment on the character and spirit of the apostle. He observes,—

The general meaning of the passage is obvious: it contains an obliging and spirited declaration of the apostle's good-will to the Christians at Thessalonica. Let it be remembered that Paul, at the time of writing this Epistle, was a poor, afflicted, solitary man, banished from his friends, living among strangers, labouring with his own hands for a scanty subsistence, and destitute of almost every earthly comfort. All this the Thessalonians knew full well. Judge, then, with what emotion they would

read this strong, this endearing profession of his concern for their welfare—they who, under God, owed their conversion to his ministry, and to whom his past sufferings on their own account, and his present distress, were perfectly known. He had told them a little before that the bitterest ingredient in all his afflictions was the apprehension he had that his sufferings might have a tendency to shake their faith, and to prejudice their minds against the gospel of Christ, ver. 5—7. And then he adds, “For now,” even at this present time, distressed and afflicted as we are, yet “now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”

Here then the purest zeal for the honour of his Master, and the most generous love to the souls of men, are happily united, and feelingly expressed in the native language of a warm and upright heart. I say, the *purest* zeal and the most *generous* love; for no tincture of selfishness appears in either. If Christ is glorified, if men are saved, Paul obtains his utmost wish; his happiness is independent of every thing else; he enjoys all that in his own estimation is worthy to be accounted life if his spiritual children stand fast in the Lord. And is not this a temper of most distinguished excellence? When I called it *amiable* I only spoke the half of its praise: it has a *dignity*, as well as a beauty, belonging to it, superior to any thing that is commonly celebrated by that name among men. Would we behold *heroism* in its fairest and most exalted form? instead of looking for it among those whom the world has styled *heroes*, we shall succeed better if we turn our eyes to Saul of Tarsus. Where shall we find such determined courage, such cool intrepidity, and contempt of danger, as in this good and faithful soldier of Christ? “Behold,” said he, to the elders of the church of Ephesus, “Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem,” &c., Acts xx. 22. With what invincible fortitude did he triumph over adversity in every frightful shape! With what noble freedom and independence of spirit did he exult amidst those sufferings of which human nature hath the greatest abhorrence! “Even unto this hour,” says he, in his letters to the Corinthians, “we both hunger and thirst and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed,” &c. And what can attract our love, what can merit our esteem, what can excite our admiration, if such a temper doth not—a temper which, to all the magnanimity of the hero, unites all the piety and benevolence of the saint? But it will not avail us barely to esteem or admire this temper: it is necessary, my brethren, that we ourselves be possessed of it.

DISLOGISTIC COMMENT.

Dislogistic comment is the expression of our feelings or sentiments on whatever is reprehensible or ridiculous; and it is not to be denied that men possessing a talent for comment have usually turned it more frequently to the severe than to the benevolent kind. Hence our British bard took occasion to say,—

In such a time as this it is not meet
That every slight offence should bear its comment.

The angry feelings are but too easily caused, and we have a host of writers that have expressed them very freely. With such an arm we must not commit injuries, but, wherever good can be effected, we may use our talent freely and nobly. In the cause of God and truth we need fear no man. We are very sorry that there is so much occasion for this article; but improprieties must be commented upon. Numerous comments of this kind are found in scripture. That is a most energetic example in Dan. v. 22, &c. Solemn indeed are those found in Matt. xxv. 26—41. Those of Jude are very severe. The addresses to the seven churches, in the second and third chapters of the Revelations, are perfectly appropriate, as are also the comments which open the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Junius has enough of this kind of comment, and sufficiently poignant. Of divinity authors in this kind we have Sterne and South at the head of the list. The latter on Hab. ii. 12: “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood,” vol. ii., one would think enough to make tyrants tremble.

The following is an example of comment mingled with description. It is on the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews :—

The offence committed by Jesus Christ was his reprobating their extortions ; for this they plotted against his life, and for this they finally effected his death,* by means of a series of atrocities, the least of which would, in the words of the prophet, have made them everlastingly “infamous.” They resorted to means never made use of but by the basest and most cruel of tyrants : first, they *bribed* one of his followers to *betray* him into their hands ; next, they got the aid of a despot and his soldiers ; next, having taken him before the judge, they brought, by means of bribes, perjured witnessses to swear against him ; having procured his condemnation, in spite of the judge’s conviction of his innocence, and evidently, therefore, by bribery here also, they put him to the death at once the most cruel and most degrading. Having obtained the sanction of the base and corrupt heathen judge, who, while he called him “*a just person*,” and declared that he “*found no fault in him*,” and “*washed his hands*” of the murder, scourged him, and gave him up to be murdered—having obtained the sanction of this bribed and unfeeling hypocrite, and having the swords and pikes of hardened soldiers to protect them against the interference of the just and humane part of the people—thus sanctioned and thus protected, the malignant and cowardly persecutors, not content with inflicting death, accompanied the infliction with every addition that innate, inveterate, and hellish cruelty could suggest. They put, in mockery, a crown of thorns upon his head, a royal robe over his shoulders, and a reed for a sceptre in his hands ; they buffeted him, spat upon him, jibed and reviled him ; and having exhausted their ingenuity in the infliction of indignities, and in cannibal-like exultations over the meek, patient, unoffending, and unresisting victim of their malice, they dragged him without the city, and fixed him on the cross by nails driven through his hands and his feet, there to suffer, amidst their still-continued mockery and scoffing, all the pains and anguish of the most cruel death ; and, as if all this were not sufficient, they nailed up *two thieves*, one on his right hand, one on his left, in order that, by implication and inference, his memory might rank along with that of the most infamous malefactors.

We may notice a passage or two from Sterne. I have no veneration for the man, but I think no writer ever gave such correct comments, especially of the severe and cutting kind, except Junius. I refer to his sermon on Luke x. 36. That the author might give more weight to his reflection on an unfeeling heart, he introduces it with a comment on the contrary disposition. He says :

There is something in our nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is subject, from whatsoever cause it may have happened ; but in such calamities as a man has fallen into through mere misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiscretion of himself, there is then something so truly interesting, that, at first sight, we generally make them our own. But where the spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumstances of misery, the mind is taken captive at once, and has no power to make resistance. Against feelings of this kind one would think it were in vain to look for an exception. But there are some minds (how shall I describe them ?) formed either of such impenetrable materials, or wrought up by habitual selfishness to such an utter insensibility of what becomes of others, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connexion at all with the species. Of this character were the priest and Levite in their conduct to the suffering traveller, half dead by the road side :—“By chance there came down a certain priest !” Merciful God ! that a teacher of thy religion should ever want humanity ! or that a man whose head might be thought full of the one should have a heart void of the other ! This, however, was the case before us : and this is no fictitious character. Look into the world. How often do you behold a sordid wretch, whose strait heart is open to no man’s affliction, taking shelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the merciful have a right to wear !

We have some severe comments on *deceit* in Farquhar, similarly introduced by contrast :—

* The author here was not exactly correct. See the Lecture on Topic XIX.

When I look back into ancient ages I see almost whole nations of pagans among whom an oath was a pledge of fidelity scarcely ever broken. Even a dissolute heathen poet, who was favourable to many vices, has expressed the greatest abhorrence of this. How shameful, then, is the degeneracy of nations called Christian!—I hail as the disciple of Jesus the poorest man who can say, I have lost the world's goods, but, by the grace of God, I have preserved my integrity. Much hast thou gained, happy victor! and insignificant are the toys which thou hast lost. But the man who is wealthy, or powerful, by unjust methods, who has not scrupled to perjure himself or to involve others in that horrible crime—my soul, enter not into his secret, dwell not in his habitation: he is a corrupter of the society of men; how detestable must he be in the sight of God!

South on Judges viii. 34, 35, having shown that the whole creation, and every part of it, is ever *receiving* and *giving*, turns indignant against ungrateful man. The language he employs is not in all respects to be imitated, but it affords a fine exemplification of the force of comment:—

And now, thou ungrateful brute, thou blemish to mankind and reproach to the creation! what shall we say of thee, or to what shall we compare thee? for thou art an exception from all the visible world: neither the heavens above nor the earth beneath afford any thing like thee; and therefore, if thou wouldst find thy parallel, go to hell, which is both the region and the emblem of *ingratitude*; for, besides thyself, there is nothing but hell that is always receiving and never restoring.

Friendship consists properly in mutual offices, and a generous strife in alternate acts of kindness; but he who does an act of kindness to an ungrateful person sets his seal to a flint, and sows his seed upon the sand; upon the former he makes no impression, and from the latter he finds no production.

The only language of ingratitude is *Give, give*; but, when the gift is once received, then, like the swine at the trough, it is silent and insatiable. In short, the ungrateful person is a monster which is all throat and belly, a kind of thoroughfare or common sewer for the good things of this world to pass into, and of whom, in respect of all kindness conferred on him, may be verified that observation of the lion's den, before which appeared the footsteps of many that had gone in thither, but no print of any that ever came out thence. The ungrateful person is the only thing in nature for which nobody living is the better. He lives to himself, and subsists by the good nature of others, of which he himself has not the least grain. He is a mere encroachment upon society, and consequently ought to be thrust out of the world as a pest and prodigy, and a creature of the devil's making and not of God's.

All kindnesses descend upon such a temper as showers of rain or rivers of fresh water falling into the main: the sea swallows them all, but is not at all changed or sweetened by them. . . . Such a one is *kindness proof*. He is impenetrable, unconquerable—unconquerable by that which conquers all things else. Flints may be melted (we see this daily), but an ingrate cannot. He that is ungrateful will be ungrateful still.

Nothing can be more poignant than this language; one would think that South spoke by experience, that he had some particular person in view, for whose ear or whose eye this severe chastisement was intended. However, the picture is not quite a private likeness: base ingratitude is too general among mankind.

Where comment is sustained upon different points of description or narration it will receive very considerable aid from contrast and comparison, but particularly the former, as will be further exemplified in the following examples.

Junius, letter xiii. To the Duke of Grafton:—

If the measures in which you have been most successful had been supported by any tolerable appearance of argument, I should have thought my time not ill employed in continuing to examine your conduct as a minister, and stating it fairly to the public; but when I see questions of the highest national importance carried as they have been, and the first principles of the constitution openly violated, without argument or decency, I confess I give up the cause in despair. The meanest of your predecessors

had abilities sufficient to give a colour to their measures. If they invaded the rights of the people, they did not dare to offer a direct insult to their understanding; and, in former times, the most venal parliaments made it a condition, in their bargain with the minister, that he should furnish them with some plausible pretences for selling their country and themselves. You have had the merit of introducing a more commendous system of government and logic. You neither addressed yourself to the passions nor to the understanding, but simply to the touch. You apply yourself immediately to the feelings of your friends, who, contrary to the forms of parliament, never enter heartily into a debate until they have divided, &c.

The same to the Duke of Bedford, letter xxi., Sept. 19, 1769.

Your history begins to be important at that auspicious period at which you were deputed to represent the earl of Bute at the court of Versailles. It was an honourable office, and executed with the same spirit with which it was accepted. Your patrons wanted an ambassador who would submit to make concessions without daring to insist upon any honourable conditions for his sovereign. Their business required a man who had as little feeling for his own dignity as for the welfare of his country; and they found him in the first rank of the nobility. Belleisle, Goree, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, Martinique, the Fisheries, and the Havanna, are glorious monuments of your grace's talents for negociation. My lord, we are too well acquainted with your pecuniary character to think it possible that so many public sacrifices should have been made without some private compensations. Your conduct carries with it an interior evidence beyond all the legal proofs of a court of justice. Even the callous pride of Lord Egremont was alarmed. He saw and felt his own dishonour in corresponding with you; and there certainly was a moment at which he meant to have resisted, had not a fatal lethargy prevailed over his faculties and carried all sense and memory away with it.

In this example from Junius the comment is rendered more severe by irony and sarcasm, which he was capable of using in the most cutting manner.

Scripture examples of Indignant Comment occur in Isa. xiv., Dan. v. 23.

The following exposure of infidelity is from the pen of Robert Hall :—

The exclusion of a Supreme Being and of a superintending Providence tends directly to the destruction of taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellency even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent—in a world which leads the devout mind step by step to the contemplation of the first fair and of the first good—the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste, it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality, and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance, when it is disappointed (and it is often so disappointed) it is exasperated into malignity and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man is a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellency which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world. The vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtue, talent, and genius are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity, a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such profound indifference to the welfare of others that whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in th

contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures, as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize, he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than that of spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence or his steps are dyed with blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement and the motive to which every action is referred.

We have an exposure of moral virtue as a plea for the divine acceptance without a Mediator, upon the Socinian or pharisaical claims, in Dr. Chalmers on Job. ix. 33 : "Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.

In fact, by putting the Mediator away from you, by reckoning on a state of safety and acceptance without him, what is the ground upon which, in reference to God, you actually put yourselves? We speak not at present of the danger of persisting in such an attitude of independence,—of its being one of those refuges of treachery in which the good man of the world is often to be found,—of its being a state wherein peace lulls him by its flatteries into deceitful repose. We are not at present saying how ruinous it is to rest a security upon an imposing exterior, when in fact the heart is not right in the sight of God, and while the reproving eye of him who judgeth not as man judgeth is upon him; or how poisonous is the unction that comes upon the soul from those praises which, upon the mere exhibition of the social virtues, are rung and circulated through society. But, in addition to the danger, let us insist upon the guilt of thus casting the offered Mediator away from us. It implies, in the most direct way possible, a sentiment of the sufficiency of our own righteousness. It is expressly saying of our obedience that it is good enough for God. It is presumptuously thinking that what pleases the world may please the Maker of it, even though he himself has declared it to be a world lying in wickedness. There is an aggravation you will perceive in all this which goes beyond the simple infraction of the commandment; it is, after the infraction of it, challenging, for some remainder, or for some semblance of conformity, the reward and approbation of the God whose law we have dishonoured; it is, after we have braved the attribute of the Almighty's justice by incurring its condemnation, making an attempt upon the attribute itself, by bringing it down to the standard of a polluted obedience; it is, after insulting the throne of God's righteousness, embarking in the still deadlier enterprise of demolishing all the stabilities which guard it, and spoiling it of that truth which has pronounced a curse on the children of iniquity, of that holiness which cannot dwell with evil, of that unchangeableness which will admit of no compromise with sinners that can violate the honours of the Godhead, or weaken the authority of his government over the universe that he has formed; it is laying those paltry accomplishments which gave you a place of distinction among your fellows before the God of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation, and calling upon him to connive at all that you want and to look with complacency on all that you possess; it is to bring to the bar of judgment the poor and imperfect samples of virtue which are current enough in a world broken loose from its communion with God, and to defy the inspection upon them of God's eternal Son and of the angels he brings along with him to witness the righteousness of his decision. Sin, indeed, has been the ruin of our nature; but this refusal of the Saviour of sinners sinks them into a perdition still deeper and more irrecoverable. It is blindness added to the enormity of sin. It is equivalent to formally-announced sentiments on your part, that your performances, sinful as they are, and polluted as they are, are good enough for heaven. It is just saying of the offered Saviour that you do not see the use of him. It is a provoking contempt of mercy, and causing the measure of ordinary guilt to overflow, by heaping the additional blasphemy upon it of calling upon God to honour it by his rewards, and to look to it with the complacency of his approbation.

We cannot, then, we cannot draw near to God by a direct or independent approach to him. And who in these circumstances is fit to be the day's-man betwixt you? There is not a fellow-mortal, from Adam downward, who has not sins of his own to answer for. There is not one of them who has not the sentence of guilt inscribed upon his forehead, and who is not arrested by the same unsealed barrier which keeps you at an inaccessible distance from God. There is not one of them whose entrance into the holiest of all would not inflict on it as great a profanation as if any of you were to present yourselves before him who dwelleth there without a Mediator. There lies a

great gulf between God and the whole of this alienated world; and, after looking round amongst all the fallen generations, we may say, in the language of the text that "that there is not a day's-man betwixt us, who can lay his hand upon us both."

The author then beautifully exhibits the Mediator, Christ Jesus, as the only Saviour.

We cannot fail to see how admirably this author, in the true spirit of critical comment turns his idea about on every side, still exhibiting variety, some new points of view not exactly taken before, how closely he keeps his point, till he convicts the self-righteous moralist, till he strips him of every subterfuge, till he exposes his every folly, and secures his sentence of condemnation. Now, though nothing short of divine power can ever reverse the foul imagination of such a subject of wretched infatuation, yet the means are to be used by a preacher of the gospel, and happy is he that can imitate this incomparable author.

Payson on Daniel v. 27. Belshazzar's impious feast.

We too have often consumed God's bounty upon our lusts; we have perverted those faculties which ought to have been consecrated to his service; we have loved, and served, and idolized the world; and the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we have not glorified; and though the displeasure of offended heaven is not now suddenly and openly displayed, as it was in the days of Daniel, though no hand is now sent to write the sentence of condemnation on the walls of our houses, yet there is still an invisible witness who continually records our actions; there is still a just and omniscient God by whom these actions are weighed; it is still true that we shall receive of him a just recompense of reward according to our works. Our days are already numbered, and will soon be finished; for God has set bounds to our lives which we cannot pass. Soon shall we be weighed in the balance of eternal truth and justice; and if we are found wanting we shall be cut in sunder, and have our portion appointed us with hypocrites and unbelievers. And say, are you all prepared to pass this solemn test? Should the same hand that wrote the doom of impious Belshazzar on the plaster of the wall of his palace be now commissioned to write our names on the plaster of the walls of this house, are there none here present whose thoughts would trouble them?—none whose countenances would change by conscious guilt?—none against whose names the damning sentence, Tekel, would be inscribed?

Bradley on Mark xvi. 7. Christ's message to Peter.

To whom was this message particularly sent? To Peter. And who was Peter, that he should be thus singled out from among the disciples? By what was he distinguished from the other ten, that he should be thus honoured? We know that at the period when he received this message he was distinguished by a pre-eminence, not in merit, but in guilt. But two days before he had denied his master, when his master was about to die for him. "All his disciples forsook him and fled," but Peter went further, and added the guilt of falsehood and curses to the baseness of desertion. His sin was of the first magnitude, of a crimson dye. It had, too, this peculiar aggravation, that it brought a scandal on the church when the church seemed least able to bear it. The Shepherd was smitten; the sheep were scattered; and this was the season in which Peter dishonoured his Lord and denied his connexion with his persecuted followers.

This then was the man to whom the risen Saviour especially directed his angel to send this joyful message. Had the faithful John, who had adhered to him in his sufferings and stood by his cross, been thus singled out, it might have excited no surprise; but for Peter, the treacherous Peter, to be thus honoured, seems indeed mysterious. Who can fathom the depth of the Saviour's love? Who can measure his unbounded grace—even this grace which produced a suitable repentance, and filled him with such grief as required an extraordinary succour?

Jay's morning Exercises, vol. i. Matt. xxvi. 58: "Peter followed afar off," and ultimately denied Christ. This leads to the comment, the force of which is heightened by a consideration of the privileges which Peter had enjoyed, and by comparison, &c. "Peter followed afar off."

This was very unbelieving in him. He had seen his Lord's miracles, and knew what he could do. He knew that he had actually stipulated for their release in the garden, as the condition of his own surrender. He knew that he had assured them that after he should have risen from the dead he would appear to them, and employ them as his witnesses, which involved their preservation. What a difference between Peter and Paul!—Paul, who said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy;" and between Peter and Luther!—Luther, who, when informed of his dangers, said, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the houses, I would go." But "Peter followed him afar off."

This was very ungrateful. The Saviour had done much for him. He had healed, by a miracle, his wife's mother. He had called him to the apostleship, the highest honour on earth. He had singularly distinguished him, with James and John on several occasions. He had saved him by his grace, and enlightened him from above, and was now going to suffer and die for him.

A friend is born for adversity. Then, instead of keeping at a distance from us, we look for attendance and sympathy. Peter could have unequivocally testified in favour of suffering innocence, but he hangs off! And Patience itself complains, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none!"

All this, too, was in violation of his own profession and vows, that he was willing to follow him to prison and to death, that he would die with him rather than deny him; and all this had scarcely left his lips, and was uttered just after our Saviour had so solemnly forewarned him. Yet "Peter followed him afar off."

This led to something worse; and I wonder not at the sequel. His after-conduct in denying him thrice, and swearing with oaths and curses, was only the continuance and the increase of his present reluctance.

Walker on unholy ministers.

A holy and upright minister of Christ never fails to possess a secret dominion in the hearts of those who are of the most opposite character. Hate him they may, and probably will, but at the same time they are constrained to reverence and esteem him; even "Herod feared John and observed him, and did many things," because he knew that he was a just and holy man.

Whereas, on the other hand, when they see those who are clothed with the sacred character paying no regard at all to propriety of conduct, but mixing with the world and living at large as other men do,—when they see them grasping at power or scrambling for riches, spreading their sails to every wind, and ready to embark in any cause that can recommend them to those who are able to gratify their ambition or covetousness,—however they may avail themselves of their treason, yet surely they must despise such traitors in their hearts, and look upon them as the dregs and refuse of human kind.

But, alas! strange as it may seem, it seldom happens that these perfidious men become so thoroughly contemptible as to be altogether harmless. Even those who despise most, by a perverse and fatal subtlety make their example an occasion of hardening their own souls, fetching arguments thence to extenuate their guilt and to cherish their presumptuous hopes of impunity; for it has often been observed that no twig is so slender that a wicked man will not cling to it when he feels himself sinking under the rebukes of conscience and the overwhelming fears of an approaching vengeance.

Bishop Sherlock on bad passions.

Hence it is evident in what manner sensual lusts do war against the soul (1 Peter ii. 11), considered as the seat of reason and all the nobler faculties, in the due use and improvement of which the dignity of man consists. If we look into the ages past, or into the present, we shall want no instances of the pernicious effects of passion, assisted by a corrupt and depraved reason. The miseries which men bring upon themselves and others are derived from this fountain; and these miseries, which we provide for ourselves and others, will be found upon a fair computation to make nine parts out of ten of all the evil which the world feels and complains of. "Whence come wars and fightings among you?" says James, "come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?" He might have added to his catalogue many iniquities more, and repeated the same questions and answers. Whence proceed jealousies, suspicion,

the violation of friendship, the discord and ruin of private families? Whence come murders, violence, and oppression? Are these the works of reason given us by God? No, they are the works of sensuality, and of reason made the slave of sensuality. Were all who are given to such works as these to be deprived of their reason, the world about them would be much happier, themselves more harmless, and, I think, not less honourable. So effectually do sinful lusts war against the soul that it would be better for the world, and not worse for the sensualist, if he had no soul at all.

Scripture examples of comment of exposure will be found in Job iv. 8—21; v. 1—14; xii. 17—25; xxi. 7—34. See also Job xxii. 4—10; xxiv. 3—25; Ps. lxxviii.

Walker on Isa. liii. 9, mixes comment with expostulation. The subject is, Despising Christ.

Consider then that to *despise* Christ and *reject* the Saviour is the blackest ingratitude that can be imagined. . . . To render evil for good, hatred for love, is accounted monstrous among men; and the person who behaves in such a manner towards his fellow-creatures is justly condemned and abhorred by all; yet the most heinous and detestable instance of ingratitude among men is as nothing when compared with your ingratitude towards God. Did he, without any solicitation from you and not only without but even contrary to your deserts, send his own Son into the world to save you? Did the Lord Jesus Christ, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," assume your nature, become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, lead a poor, afflicted, persecuted life, and at last die a shameful, painful, and accursed death, to satisfy offended justice and to render your happiness consistent with the honour of the divine government? And is this your requital?

I beseech you, my brethren, to bestow some attention to this; and, if your hearts have any softness at all, such unparalleled baseness cannot fail to make the deepest impression upon them. Does this astonishing, this undeserved goodness merit no regard? Does God's unspeakable gift to man deserve no return of gratitude and praise? Shall the blood of Christ be shed in vain—nay, trampled under your feet as an unholy thing? Will you crucify the Son of God afresh, and say, by your neglect of his great salvation, "Away with him! away with him!" "we have loved strangers, and after them we will go?" Surely you cannot, you will not, pretend to justify such conduct; there is something in it so disingenuous and perverse, so shocking and unnatural, that I am persuaded when you attend to it you must loathe and abhor yourselves on account of it.

But this is not the whole of your guilt; your ingratitude is heightened by the most insolent contempt both of the wisdom and goodness of God. You charge God with folly when you reject the terms of the gospel covenant; for your behaviour plainly implies one of the following accusations:—that this method of salvation is unnecessary, and that God from all eternity has employed his counsels about a needless affair, or else that it is ineffectual and that the person whom God has chosen to execute his designs is not worthy to be depended upon, or that the terms proposed are so rigorous and severe that a wise man would choose to perish than submit to them. Thus dost thou arraign thy God, O sinner! Dost thou hope to prevail in the day when God shall plead with thee?

Nay, further, by despising and rejecting Christ you openly proclaim war against the Most High and bid him defiance. "He has set his king upon his holy hill of Zion, and put all things under his feet;" he has ordained by an irreversible decree that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." He has published to the world that there is no other name given among men by which they can be saved than the name of Jesus, that this glorious Mediator is constituted the final judge of mankind, and that those who do not bow to the sceptre of his grace shall be dashed to pieces with his rod of iron in that day when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon those who know not God and obey not this gospel which we now preach to you;—and yet in the face of all these declarations, you proudly say by your conduct, "We will not have this man to reign over us; we neither fear his power nor court his grace, but are determined to stand on our own defence."

Such, my brethren, is the malignity of your sin: it includes the blackest ingratitude, heightened by the most malignant contempt; nay, an open defiance of the omnipotent God, rejecting his offered mercy and daring him to execute all the rigours of his

justice. I do not mean that you are at present conscious of this complicated impiety ; I rather suppose that you are startled when you hear it mentioned, and are ready to reply, as Hazeel did to Elisha, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things!" But be assured all I have now said shall be made good against you at last, if you continue to despise and reject the Saviour ; and the greatest mercy that can befall you in the mean time is to get those eyes opened which Satan has so long closed, that you may see and abhor your guilt in this matter. Oh ! be exhorted, then, deliberately to weigh the representation I have given you, if you go out of this world with such a dreadful load of guilt as I have described !

Here is a specimen of the way of men—of God dealing with sinners. Mr. W. attacks the strongholds of nature's depravity ; and, if such powerful comment take not effect, sad indeed must be the state into which a man falls when he is thus past feeling. Mr. Walker, in the concluding part of his discourse, assumes the most inviting forms of address, endeavours to touch the heart, and incite to feelings of the most winning character.

A comment of caution to ministers on 1 Cor. iv, 30 ; also suited to 1 Cor. ix. 27, Dr. Chalmers's text.

A preacher may have his mind familiarized to every article of faith, so as to demonstrate the channel of influence by which it is brought down from heaven upon the hearts of believers,—to cast an eye of intelligence on the whole system of Christian doctrine,—to lay bare those ligaments of connexion by which a true faith in the mind is ever sure to bring a new spirit and a new practice along with it,—and to hold up the light both of scripture and experience over the whole process of man's regeneration. It is possible for him to do all this, and yet have no part in that regeneration,—to declare with ability and effect the gospel to others, and yet himself to be a cast-away,—to unravel the whole of that spiritual mechanism by which a sinner is transformed into a saint, while he does not exemplify that mechanism upon his own person,—to explain what must be done and what must be undergone in the process of becoming one of the children of the kingdom, while he himself remains one of the children of the world. To him the kingdom of God has come in word, and it has come in the letter, and it has come in natural discernment ; but it has not come in power. He may have profoundly studied the whole doctrine of the kingdom, and have conceived the various ideas of which it is composed, and have embodied them in word, and have poured them forth in utterance, and yet be as little spiritualized by these manifold operations as the air is spiritualized by its being the avenue of the sound of his voice to the ears of his listening auditory. The living man may, with all the force of his native intelligence, be a mere vehicle of transmission. The Holy Ghost may leave the message to take its own way through his mind, and may refuse the accession of his influence till it makes its escape from the lips of the preacher, and may trust for its conveyance to those aerial undulations by which the report is carried forward to an assembled multitude, and may only, after the entrance of hearing has been effected for the terms of the message,—may only, after the unaided powers of moral and physical nature have brought the matter thus far,—may then, and not till then, add his own influence to the truths of the message, and send them with this impregnation from the ear to the conscience of any whom he listeth. And thus from the workings of a cold and desolate bosom in the human expounder, may there proceed a voice which, in its way to some of those who are assembled around him, shall turn out to be a voice of urgency and power. He may be the instrument of blessings to others which have never come with kindly and effective influence upon his own heart. He may inspire an energy which he does not feel, and pour a comfort into the wounded spirit the taste of which and the enjoyment of which is not permitted to his own. And nothing can serve more effectually than this experimental fact to humble him, and to demonstrate the existence of a power which cannot be wielded by all the energies of nature,—a power often refused to eloquence, often refused to the might and glory of human wisdom,—often refused to the most strenuous exertions of human might and human talent, and generally met with in richest abundance among the ministrations of the men of simplicity and prayer.

You will have perceived from the foregoing examples that comment, whether laudatory or reprehensive, unites with description, narration, amplification, expostulation, &c. To make this matter plainer, however, I shall add

a few examples classed according to the character of the materials on which the comment is engrafted and the manner in which it is introduced, only premising that the former examples might have been similarly classified, had it not been my object to keep the two *kinds* of comment distinct, and that these are merely specimens. A complete list would embrace almost every kind of writing.

ARGUMENTATIVE COMMENT.

Jay on Acts iii. 9, 10. The reality of this miracle is shown by brief but forcible arguments, and the effect is greatly enhanced by the several comments that are interspersed.

The cripple's walking was a proof of the reality and perfection of the cure. His praising God was the proper improvement of it. What an attestation was here to the divine mission of the apostles, and so to the truth of Christianity itself! There was nothing like artifice or collusion in this miracle. The patient resided not in a remote place but in Jerusalem, that is, in the midst of the enemies of Christ. He had been lame from his mother's womb, and was now upwards of 40 years old. He was well known. He was a beggar. Multitudes had seen him; many had relieved him; and many had handled him, for he was carried daily to the place of begging. And this was not an obscure corner, but the entrance into the temple. And the thing was not done in the night; but at nine o'clock in the morning, when there was a concourse of people. Put all this together; and then ask whether any thing could have been fairer. Could any thing have been more open to detection had there been any imposture? Compare such an achievement with the prodigies of heathenism and the miracles of the Romish Church. What then shall we think of the *credulity* of unbelievers? What is the faith of a Christian to their belief? Christians believe difficulties, because they are abundantly confirmed; but *they* swallow improbabilities and impossibilities. Their rejection of the gospel cannot arise from an intellectual but a moral cause. They do not want evidence, but disposition; they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

Walker furnishes a specimen of familiar argument united with strong comment and solemn appeal, in his discourse on Ps. xix. 13, first clause.

It is vain to say, O sinner! that the sins of profane swearing, perjury, theft, uncleanness, and drunkenness, are not presumptuous sins. It is in vain for you to plead that you do not directly intend thus much; I verily believe you think so; for, proud and stubborn as you are I am confident that you dare not utter such blasphemies before God, nor even avow them to your own heart. But does it follow thence that you are not chargeable with them? The fallacy of this reasoning can easily be detected. Tell me, do you intend your own damnation? I need not wait for an answer; I am sure you do not. Pray, then, what meaning have you at all? You wilfully transgress the laws of God, but you do not intend to be punished for it: on the contrary, you shudder at the prospect of suffering, and would certainly oppose it with all your might. This is one side. On the other hand you say that you have no direct intention to injure or insult the majesty of God; you mean no prejudice to his authority, nor to any of his perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, or almighty power. Can any body reconcile these two opposites? You are unwilling to be miserable, and yet you are willing that God should possess those tremendous attributes by the exercise of which you must be made miserable! This is a flat contradiction. The case is plain, whether you perceive it or not: you would certainly dethrone God if you could; you would reverse his laws or disarm his power that you might follow your inclinations without fear or control. And this is the disposition of every presumptuous sinner, though perhaps his heart may be so hard and unfeeling as not to perceive it.

Dr. Chalmers on Mark ii. 27. The Sanctity of the Sabbath.

The first recommendation of the Sabbath is the place which it occupies in the Decalogue. There was much of Jewish observancy swept away with the ruin of the national institutions. There was much designed for a temporary purpose, and which fell into disuse among the worshippers of God after that purpose was accomplished. A Christian of the present day looks upon many of the most solemn services of Juda-

ism in no other light than as fragments of a perishable ritual; nor does he ever think that, upon himself, they have any weight of personal obligation; but this does not hold true of all the duties and all the services of Judaism. There is a broad line of distinction between that part of it which is now broken up and that part of it which still retains all the authority of a perpetual and immutable law. Point out to us a single religious observance of the Hebrews that is now done away, and we are able to say of it, and of all others which have experienced a similar termination, that they every one of them live without the compass of the Ten Commandments. They have no place whatever in that great record of duty which was graven on the tables of stone, and placed within the holy of holies, under the mercy-seat. Then, how does the law of the Sabbath stand as to this particular? Does it lie within or without a limit so tangible, and forming so distinct and so noticeable a line of demarcation? We see it standing within this record, of which all the other duties are of such general and such imperishable obligation. We meet with it in the interior of that hallowed ground of which every other part is so sacred and so inviolable. We see it occupying its own conspicuous place in that registry of duties all of which have the substance and the irrevocable permanency of moral principle. On reading over the other articles of this memorable code, we see all of them stamped with such enduring characters of obligation as no time can wear away, and the law of the Sabbath taking its station in the midst of them, and enshrined on each side of it among the immutabilities of truth, and justice, and piety. It is true that much of Judaism has now fallen into desuetude, and that many of its dearest and most distinguished solemnities are now regarded in no other light than as the obsolete and repealed observances of an antiquated ritual; but it is worthy of being observed well that the whole of this work of demolition took place without the line of demarcation; we see no attempt whatever to violate the sanctity of the ground which this line encloses. We nowhere see any express or recorded incursion upon any one of the observances of the Decalogue. We perceive an apostle in the New Testament making his allusion to the fifth of those observances, and calling it "the first commandment with promise;" and, by the very notice which he bestows on the arrangement of the duties, we are given to understand that no attempt had been made to disturb their order or to depose any one of them from the place which had been assigned to it. We should count it an experiment of the most daring audacity, without the intimation of any act of repeal passed in the high legislation of heaven, to fly in the face of that Sabbath law which stands enrolled among the items of so notable and so illustrious a document; and nothing short of a formal and absolute recalculation can ever tempt us to think that the new dispensation of the gospel has created so much as one vacancy in that register of duties which leave upon the aspect of its whole history the impress of a revealed demand that is unalienable and everlasting. We cannot give up one article in that series of enactments which in every age of the Christian world has been revealed as a code, not of ceremonial, but of moral law. We cannot consent, but on the ground of some resistless and overbearing argument, to the mutilation of the integrity of this venerable record. We see throughout the whole line of Jewish history that it stood separate and alone, and that, free from all the marks of national or local peculiarity, it bore upon it none of the frailty of the other institutions, but has been preserved and handed down to us an unchanged standard of duty for all generations. We see at the very commencement of the Mosaic dispensation how God himself thought fit to signalize it; for from the place where he stood did he proclaim the ten commandments of the law in the hearing of the assembled multitude: while every other enactment, whether moral or ceremonial, was conveyed to the knowledge of the people through the medium of human legislation; and we should feel that in dethroning any one of the perceptive impositions of the Decalogue from its authority over our practice, we were bidding defiance to the declared will of the Eternal, and resisting a voice which sounds as loudly and as impressively to our conscience as the one that issued in thunder from the flaming top of Sinai, and scattered dismay among the thousands of Israel.

We have many examples of argumentative comment in Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Several examples will also be found in the former part of this work, especially my sermon on Jer. li. 10, and Horsely on Psalm xiv. and xevii. 7. See Scripture Index.

CONTEMPLATIVE COMMENT.

Howe on Matt. xvi. 24. Delight in God.

How great is the pleasure arising from self-denial ! How pleasant when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when the idol self is no longer maintained within us at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope—an idol that engrosses the whole substance of our souls, that exhausts and devours that strength and vigour of our spirits which it does not maintain and cannot repair ; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, and an unlawful provision for it ! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel on being delivered from that soul-wasting monster that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history,—that has made more desolations in the souls of men than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served with only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated only with such refectations, or where the lives and safety of the most were to be brought out of the constant and successive tribute of the blood of not a few,—that hath devoured more and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than even Moloch or the Minotaur ! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and broken down, what jubilee does it make, what songs of triumph and praise does it furnish and supply to the poor soul now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage ! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it (when once the grace of God and these dear experiences give men to understand it) to study to please God than themselves, when they feel themselves dead to their former lord's service, and only to live to God through Jesus Christ, when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof ! Rom. vi. 11, 12, 13. What an ease is it to the spirit of a man when he has not himself to seek and serve in any unlawful disallowed sense, when he finds himself not necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do, when he perceives himself counterpoised by a preventing better principle and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way, when he finds that he has nothing left him to do but to serve God, to know his will, and to do it, and when he is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself, that which is necessary being a part of his duty, and therefore done on purpose only for God ! What life is pleasant if this be not ? Surely wherein it is attained to it is most pleasant, and hither this gracious heart-rectifying communication is greatly tending.

Scripture examples of contemplative comment will be found in Job iii. 17—26 ; vii. 1—10 ; xiv. 1—3 ; xix. 25—27 ; xxix. ; Ps. xc. ; and the book of Ecclesiastes.

HYPERBOLICAL COMMENT.

Payson on Job xxii. 5. Sinners will not be saved.

Reason with them, they will not be convinced ; set motives before them, they will not be persuaded ; address their hearts, they will not be affected ; appeal to their consciences, they will not feel guilty ; attempt to excite their fears, they will not be alarmed ; endeavour to allure them to Christ by promises and invitations, they will not come ; beseech them, weep over them, expostulate with them in the most affectionate and pathetic manner, set good and evil, life and death, heaven and hell, judgment and eternity, before them in every form, they make light of all, and go their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. In vain have prophets prophesied ; in vain have apostles preached ; in vain have angels descended from heaven ; in vain has the Son of God appeared on earth and spoken as man never spoke ; in vain has the eternal Father proclaimed from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear him ;"—still sinners will not hear ; they will not come to Christ for life ; they will neglect the great salvation. Sin is committed against an infinite Being,—against God, a being infinitely powerful, just, and good. The criminality of an offence is in proportion to the excellence and greatness of the person against whom it is committed. For instance, it is wrong for a child to strike a brother. Should the same child strike his father, it would be incomparably more so. Were his father a king, possessed of every good quality, the act would still be more criminal. But God is our heavenly Father, the universal King, infinitely exalted above every human parent—above every earthly monarch, possessed in an infinite degree of every perfection which can entitle him to the perfect love, confidence, and obedience of his creatures. He is also the author and preserver of the very powers and faculties which we employ in sinning against him, and he has conferred upon us innumerable favours. Of course, we are under infinite

obligations to love and obey him ; and therefore to violate these obligations, and to sin against such a being, must be an infinite evil.

INTERROGATIVE APPEAL.

Davies on Rev. iii. 15, 16.

Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ ? Is this a suitable return for that love which brought him down from his native paradise into our wretched world ?—that love which kept him mind, for thirty-three painful years, intent upon this one object, the salvation of sinners ?—that love which rendered him cheerfully patient of the shame, the curse, and the torture of crucifixion, and all the agonies of the most painful death ?—that love which makes him still the sinner's friend in the court of heaven, where he appears as our prevailing advocate and intercessor ? Blessed Jesus ! is lukewarmness a proper return to thee for all this kindness ? No ; methinks devils could not treat thee worse. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-sinners, who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotion and faint services ? Then every grateful and generous passion is extinct in your souls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baseness.

As lukewarmness is not a suitable feeling towards Christ, so neither is it suitable to a view of eternal happiness and misery. Is it a suitable temper with regard to happiness far exceeding the utmost bounds of our present thoughts, equal to the largest capacities of our souls in the most improved and perfect state—a happiness beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this transitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famishing for ever if these be our only portion—a happiness that will last as long as our immortal spirits, and never fade nor fly from us ? Or are our lukewarmness and indifference a suitable temper with respect to misery beyond expression, beyond conception dreadful—misery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable justice upon a number of obstinate incorrigible rebels, for numberless wilful and daring provocations, inflicted on purpose to show his wrath and make his power known—misery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent passions, of a guilty conscience, of malicious, tormenting devils—misery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought ?) that should last as long as the eternal God should live to inflict it, as long as sin should continue evil to deserve it, without mitigation, never, never to see an end ? And remember that a state of happiness or misery is not remote from us, but near us ; just before us ; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment we may enter into it, as an estate for which we are now candidates, now upon our trial. Our eternal all is now at stake. O ! sirs, does an inactive, careless posture become us in such a situation ? Can this be a matter of indifference to us ? Can you be lukewarm about such matters ?

CONTRAST.

Chalmers on Astronomy. Infidels contrasted with angels.

The infidel, then, as he widens the field of his contemplations (through immensities and worlds), would suffer its every object to die away in forgetfulness. The angels, expatiating as they do over the range of a loftier universality, are represented as all awake to the history of each of its distinct and subordinate provinces. The infidel, with his mind aloft among suns and among systems, can find no place in his already occupied mind for the humble world which lodges and accommodates our species. The angels, standing upon a loftier summit, and with a mightier prospect of creation before them, are yet represented as looking down on this single world and attentively marking every feeling and every demand of all its families. The infidel, by sinking us down to an unnoticeable minuteness, would lose sight of our dwelling-place altogether, and spread a darkening shroud of oblivion over all the concerns and over all the interests of men : but the angels will not so abandon us ; undazzled by the whole surpassing grandeur of that scenery which is around them, they are revealed as directing all the fulness of their regard to this our habitation, and casting a longing and benignant eye on ourselves and on our children.

The infidel will tell us of those worlds which roll afar and the number of which outstrips the arithmetic of the human understanding, and then, with the hardness of an unfeeling calculator, will consign the one we occupy, with all its guilty generations, to despair. But he who counts the number of the stars is set forth to us as looking at every inhabitant among the millions of our species, and by the word of the gospel beckoning to him with the hand of invitation ; and on the very first step of his return

is moving towards him, with all the eagerness of the prodigal's father, to receive him back again into that presence from which he had wandered. And as to this world, in favour of which the scowling infidel will not permit one solitary movement, all heaven is represented as in a stir about its restoration; and there cannot a single son or a single daughter be recalled from sin to righteousness without an acclamation of joy among the hosts of paradise. Aye, and I can say it of the humblest and the unwor-thiest of you all, that the eyes of angels are upon him, and that his repentance would at this moment send forth a wave of delightful sensibility through the mighty throng of their innumerable legions.

Contrast of false and real religion.—Blair, in his *Lectures on Rhetoric*, cites a fine passage of this kind from Bishop Sherlock. Natural religion is personified as being in a state of hesitation whether to adopt the Koran or the Gospel. The preacher then addresses her in these words :—

Go to Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and tens of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. See the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miser-able distress of all the inhabitants of those countries, who were left to see wretched-ness in its most gloomy forms. When you have viewed him in this scene, go into his retirements; see the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives; see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his divine commission to justify his lust and oppres-sion. If you are weary of this disgusting prospect, turn to the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse; see him in his most retired privacies; follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God; go to his table, and view his poor fare; hear his heavenly discourse; see him injured, but not provoked; attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the cross; view him in the agony of death; hear his last prayer for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Here, then, stand still, and judge which is the true prophet of God. Let the centurion speak your language, "*Truly this man was the Son of God!*"

EXPOSITORY COMMENT.

The excellent Matthew Henry furnishes some fine specimens of comment, several of which I should be induced to transcribe if I did not hope that you were too well acquainted with his Exposition to render this necessary. One extract from his comment on the prayer of Jonah (ch. iv. 1—3) will suffi-ciently show how the *comment* stands distinguished from the exposition which furnishes its ground-work.

How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh, upon their repent-ance! This gives us occasion to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would think he should have done; for, when they did repent, and found mercy,

I. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found (v. 1.): "It displeased Jonah exceed-ingly;" and (would you think it?) "he was very angry," was in a great heat about it. It was very wrong, 1. That he had so little government of himself as to be displeased and very angry; he had no rule over his own spirit, and, therefore, as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares. 2. That he had so little reverence of God as to be displeased and angry at what he did, as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza. Whatever pleases God should please us, and, though we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it. 3. That he had so little affection to men as to be dis-pleased and very angry at the conversion of the Ninevites, and their reception into the divine favour. This was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees, who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners; but is our eye evil because his is good? But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented and were spared? It cannot be expected that we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor any thing that has the face or colour of reason; but we may con-jecture what the provocation was. Hot spirits are usually high spirits; only by pride comes contention both with God and man. It was a point of honour that Jonah stood

upon, and that made him angry. (1.) He was jealous for the honour of his country. The repentance and reformation of Nineveh shamed the obstinacy of Israel that repented not, but hated to be reformed; and the favour God had shown to these Gentiles, upon their repentance, was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be (as at length they were) rejected and cast out of the church, and the Gentiles substituted in their room. (2.) He was jealous for his own honour, fearing lest, if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days, he should be accounted a false prophet and stigmatized accordingly; whereas he needed not to be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied that, for the preventing of it, they should repent, and if they did, it should be prevented. And no one will complain of being deceived by him that is better than his word; and he would rather gain honour among them, by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men (and such a one Jonah seems to have been) are apt to make themselves uneasy by fancying evils to themselves that are not, nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our frights, are owing to the power of imagination; and those are to be pitied as perfect bond-slaves that are under the power of such a tyrant.

II. He quarrelled with God about it. When his heart was hot within him, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and here he tells us what he said, v 2, 3. He "prayed unto the Lord," but it was a very awkward prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teaches us to pray submissively, which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent, he applied to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles, but his corruptions got head of his graces, and, when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

1. He now begins to justify himself in fleeing from the presence of the Lord, when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before, with good reason, condemned himself: "*Lord*," said he, "*was not this my saying when I was in my own country?* Did I not foresee that if I went to preach at Nineveh they would repent, and thou wouldst forgive them, and then thy word would be reflected upon and reproached as *yea* and *noy*?" What a strange sort of man was Jonah, to dread the success of his ministry! Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have despaired of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preaching because he was afraid of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion, for it seems that the whale's belly itself could not cure him of it. It was his *saying* when he was in his own country, but it was a bad saying; yet here he stands to it; and, very unlike the other prophets, *desires the woeful day* which he had foretold, and grieves because it does not come! Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that, when it is done, which he was before afraid of; so hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? "Because I knew that thou wast a gracious God," indulgent and easily pleased, that "thou wast slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." All this is very true; and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name, and the experiences of all ages; but it is strange and very unaccountable that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise Jonah should make the matter of reflection upon God; as if that were an imperfection of the divine nature which is indeed the greatest glory of it—that God is *gracious and merciful*. The servant that said, "I knew thee to be a hard man," said that which was false, and yet, had it been true, it was not the proper matter of a complaint; but Jonah, though he says what is true, yet, speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very absurdly. Those have a spirit of contention and contradiction indeed that can find in their hearts to quarrel with the goodness of God and his sparing, pardoning mercy, to which we all owe it that we are out of hell. This is making that to be to us a "savour of death unto death," which ought to be a "savour of life unto life."

2. In a passion he wishes for death, ver. 3. A strange expression of his causeless passion! "*Now, O Lord! take, I beseech thee, my life from me.* If Nineveh must live let me die, rather than see thy word and mine disproved, rather than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles," as if there were not grace enough in God both for Jews and Gentiles, or as if his countrymen were the further off from mercy for the Ninevites being taken into favour. When the prophet Elijah had laboured in vain he wished he might die, and it was his infirmity, 1 Kings xix. 4. But Jonah labours to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet wishes he may die, as if, having done much good, he were afraid of living to do more; he *sees of the travail of his soul and is dissatisfied*. What a perverse spirit is mingled with every word he says! When Jonah was brought alive out the whale's belly he thought life a very valuable mercy, and was thankful to that God

who brought up his life from corruption (chap. ii. 6), and a great blessing his life had been to Nineveh; yet now, for that very reason, it became a burden to himself, and he begs to be eased of it, pleading, "It is better for me to die than to live." Such a word as this may be the language of grace, as it was in Paul, who desired "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better:" but here it was the language of folly, and passion, and strong corruption; and so much the worse, (1.) Jonah being now in the midst of his usefulness, and therefore fit to live. He was one whose ministry God wonderfully owned and prospered. The conversion of Nineveh might give him hopes of being instrumental to convert the whole kingdom of Assyria; it was therefore very absurd for him to wish he might die, when he had a prospect of living to so good a purpose and could be so ill spared. (2.) Jonah being now so much out of temper, and therefore unfit to die. How durst he think of dying, and going before God's judgment seat, when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? But those who passionately desire death commonly have least reason to do it, as being very much unprepared for it. Our business is to get ready to die by doing the work of life, and then to refer ourselves to God to take away our life when and how he pleases.

Horsley on John xiii. 34. The "new commandment."

It was, indeed, in various senses, a *new commandment*. First, as the thing enjoined was a great novelty in the practice of mankind. The age in which our Saviour lived on earth was an age of pleasure and dissipation; sensual appetite, indulged to the most unwarrantable excess, had extinguished all the nobler feelings. This is ever its effect when it is suffered to get the ascendant, and it is for this reason that it is said by the apostle to war against the soul. The refinements of luxury, spread among all ranks of men, had multiplied their artificial wants beyond the proportion of the largest fortunes; and thus, bringing all men into the class of the necessitous, had universally induced that churlish habit of the mind in which every feeling is considered as a weakness which terminates not in self, and those generous sympathies by which every one is impelled to seek his neighbour's good are industriously suppressed as disturbers of the repose of the individual and enemies to his personal enjoyment. This is the tendency, and has ever been the effect, of luxury, in every nation where it has unhappily taken root. It renders every man selfish upon principle. The first symptom of this fatal corruption is the extinction of genuine public spirit, that is, of all real regard to the interest and good order of society, in the place of which arises that base and odious counterfeit which, assuming the name of patriotism, thinks to cover the infamy of every vice which can disgrace the private life of man by clamours for the public good, of which the real object all the while is nothing more than the gratification of the ambition and rapacity of the demagogue. The next stage of the corruption is a perfect indifference and insensibility, in all ranks of men, to everything but the gratification of the moment. An idle peasantry subsist themselves by theft and violence, and a voluptuous nobility squander, on base and criminal indulgences, that superfluity of store which should go to the defence of the country in times of public danger or to the relief of private distress. In an age therefore of luxury, such as that was in which our Saviour lived on earth, genuine philanthropy being necessarily extinguished, the religious love of our neighbour, which is far beyond ordinary philanthropy, will rarely, if ever, be found.

Nor was it missing in the manners of the world only; in the lessons of divines and moralists, mutual love was a topic out of use! The Jews were divided in their religious opinions between the two sects of Sadducees and Pharisees. The former were the infidels of their age. The religion of the latter consisted chiefly in form and show—if that indeed can be called a religion of which the love of God and man made no essential part! Judge whether those taught men to love one another, who taught ungrateful children to evade the fifth commandment with an untroubled conscience, and to defraud an aged parent of that support which by the law of God and nature was his due!

Horsley on Mark vii. 37. The sentiments of those who witnessed the miracles of Christ.

We read in Luke that our "Lord was casting out a devil, and it was dumb; and it came to pass that, when the devil had gone out, the dumb spoke, and the populace that were witnesses of the miracle wondered." *They wondered*, and there was an end of their speculations upon the business: they made no further enquiry and their thoughts led them to no further conclusion than that the thing was very strange. These seem to have been people of that stupid sort which abounds too much in all ranks of society, whose notice is attracted by things that come to pass, not according to the difficulty of ac-

counting for them (a thing that never breaks their slumbers), but according as they are more or less frequent. They are neither excited by any scientific curiosity to enquire after the established causes of the most common things, nor to any pious regard to God's providential government of the world, to enquire after him in the most uncommon. Day and night succeed each other in constant vicissitude; the seasons hold their unvaried course; the sun makes his annual journey through the same regions of the sky; the moon runs the circle of her monthly changes, with a motion ever varying, yet subject to one constant law and limit of its variations; the tides of the ocean ebb and flow; heavy waters are suspended at a great height in the thinner fluid of the air,—they are collected in clouds which overspread the summer sky, and descend in showers to refresh the verdure of the earth,—or they are driven by strong gales to the bleak regions of the north, whence the wintry winds return them to these milder climates, to fall lightly upon the tender blade in flakes of snow, and form a mantle to shelter the hope of the husbandman from the nipping frost. These things are hardly noticed by the sort of people who are now before us: they excite not even their wonder, though in themselves most wonderful, much less do they awaken them to enquire by what mechanism of the universe a system so complex in its motions and vicissitudes, and yet so regular and orderly in its complications, is carried on. They say to themselves, "These are the common occurrences of nature," and they are satisfied. These same sort of people, if they see blind men restored to sight, or the deaf and dumb suddenly endowed with the faculties of hearing and of speech, without the use of physical means, wonder,—that is, they say to themselves, "It is uncommon," and they concern themselves no further. These people discover God neither in the still voice of nature nor in the sudden blaze of miracle. They seem hardly to come within that definition of man which was given by some of the ancient philosophers, that he is an animal that contemplates the objects of its senses; they contemplate nothing: two sentences,—"It is very common!" "It is very strange!"—make at once the sum of the detail of their philosophy and of their belief, and are to them a solution of all difficulties. They wonder for awhile, but they presently dismiss the subject of their wonder from their thoughts. Wonder, connected with a principle of rational curiosity, is the source of all knowledge and discovery,—and it is a principle even of piety; but wonder that ends in wonder, and is satisfied with wondering, is the quality of an idiot.

This stupidity, so common to all ranks of men—for what I now describe is no peculiarity of those who are ordinarily called the vulgar and illiterate—this stupidity is not natural to man; it is the effect of an over-solicitude about the low concerns of the present world, which alienates the mind from objects most worthy its attention, and keeps its noble faculties employed on things of an inferior sort, drawing them aside from all enquiries except what may be the speediest means to increase a man's wealth and advance his worldly interests.

We see here the power of comment; it seizes even a single word, tries it upon its principles, especially on qualities, as in Topic xxiii, examines and condemns, or, on another subject, commends and approves.

Some may get into a miserable habit of trifling upon words; but when words can, as in this instance, be turned to principles, to a development of character, a signal honour attends the examination.

Jay's Exercises, on Rom. x. 12: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

He is rich, that is, he is *plenteous*, to all that call upon him. Some, if they are bountiful, are poor in bounty. And this appears, not only in the smallness of their gift, but in the *mode* of giving. It seems done by constraint, not willingly and of a ready mind. It does not drop from them as honey from the comb or flow like water from a spring. It seems an unnatural effort. You feel no more respect when they give much than when they give little; every thing like nobleness is destroyed by the manner. The meanness of the disposition is betrayed; and the poor-spirited mortal can no more give kindly and generously than a clown can dance gracefully. But "the Lord God is a sun; he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold." He is "abundant in goodness and truth." He "abundantly pardons;" and, while he "gives liberally," he "upbraids not."

South on Gen. i. 27. Man formed in the image of God.

Such was his *understanding*, his noblest faculty. It was then sublime, clear, aspiring and, as it were, the soul's upper region, lofty and serene, free from the vapours and dis-

turbances of the inferior affections. It was the leading, controlling faculty ; all the passions wore the colours of reason : it was not consul, but dictator. Discourse was then almost as quick as intuition ; it was nimble in proposing, firm in concluding ; it could sooner determine than now it can dispute. Like the sun, it had both light and agility ; it knew no rest but in motion, no quiet but in activity : it did not so properly apprehend as irradiate the object, not so much find as make things intelligible : it did arbitrate upon the several reports of sense and all the varieties of imagination, not, like the drowsy judge, only hearing, but also directing their verdict. In fine, it was vegete, quick, and lively, open as the day, untainted as the morning, full of the innocence and sprightliness of youth ; it gave the soul a bright and full view into all things, and was not only a window, but itself a prospect. Briefly, there is as much difference between the clear representation of the understanding then, and the obscure discoveries that it makes now, as there is between the prospect of a casement and of a key-hole.

The same author, on 1 Tim. vi. 2.

The teaching part, indeed, of a Romish bishop is easy enough, since his grand business is only to teach men how to be ignorant, to instruct them how to know nothing, or, which is all one, to know upon trust, to believe implicitly, and, in a word, to see with other men's eyes, till they come to be lost in their own souls. But our religion is a religion that dares to be understood, that offers itself to the search of the inquisitive, to the inspection of the severest and most enlightened reason ; for, being secure of her substantial truth and purity, she knows that for her to be seen and looked upon is to be embraced and admired, as there needs no greater argument for men to love the light than to see it. It needs no legends, no service in an unknown tongue, no inquisition against scripture, no purging out the heart and sense of authors, no altering or bribing the voice of antiquity to speak for it ; it needs none of those laborious artifices of ignorance, none of those cloaks of covering. The Romish faith, indeed, must be covered, or it cannot keep warm. And their clergy deal with their religion as with a great crime ; if it is discovered, they are undone ; but there is no bishop of the Church of England but accounts it his interest as well as his duty to comply with this precept of St. Paul : "These things teach and exhort."

Bradley on Eph. iii. 8. "Less than the least of all saints."

We cannot take even the most hasty glance at the writings of the apostle, without at the same time noticing the *entire submission of his mind to the gospel of Christ*, the simple and hearty reception which he gave to divine truths. He had naturally the same proud heart that we have, and hated the humiliating doctrines connected with the cross of Christ as much as we hate them ; nay, they were more offensive to him than they can be to us. They were opposed, not only to those common workings of pride which we all feel, but to a multitude of prejudices peculiar to himself and to the age and country in which he lived. He was a Jew ; he was a scholar of Gamaliel ; he was a man of strong intellectual powers ; and yet all the prejudices of the Jew, all the pride of the scholar, and all the dictates of worldly wisdom were torn out of his heart, and the once proud and haughty Saul is seen sitting at the feet of the carpenter's son, humble and teachable as a little child. Read his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, brethren, and see how low the grace of God can humble the proudest mind. We do not find him endeavouring in these epistles to accommodate the doctrines of the Gospel to his former opinions, altering and qualifying them to make them square with the feelings of the Jew or the pride of the philosopher ; he received them all with simplicity and godly sincerity. Every imagination, "every high thing," which had so long "exalted itself in his mind against the knowledge of God," seems to be utterly cast down, and every thought brought into subjection, "into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

The importance of comment must have been so apparent from the perusal of the foregoing observations and examples, that any additional arguments to enforce a careful attention to its cultivation would be superfluous. The apostle Paul, in addressing his beloved son Timothy, says, "Meditate on these things ; give thyself wholly to them." So would I say to you ; and may your profiting appear to all your people, and be rendered subservient to their present peace and future joy.

APPENDIX.

No. 1.

ON PLAIN LANGUAGE.

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."—*Hab. ii. 2.*

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."—*1 Cor. ii. 4.*

"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, so that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."—*1 Cor. xiv. 19.*

"A preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of the *most unlearned man in the parish*, and therefore must put such parts of his discourse as he would have all understand in so plain a form of words that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly study to do if his desire be to edify them rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and a highly-spoken man."—BISHOP BURNET.

"Avoid all exotic phrases, scholastic terms, and forced rhetorical figures, since it is not difficult to make easy things appear hard; but to render hard things easy is the hardest part of a good orator as well as preacher."—ARCHBISHOP USHER.

THE spirit of the above quotations clearly points out what ought to be done in reference to the object of this essay, and which I presume will be a powerful auxiliary to the intention of the preceding Lectures. The Lectures were intended to assist in introducing order and variety, as well as to suggest the sources of thought available in the construction of a sermon; the design of this Essay is to recommend *plain words* for filling it up, to secure, as far as possible, the edification of the most untaught of the people. In the Lectures I have, in several places, hinted at the necessity of this; and now I wish to be explicit, forcible, and conclusive, in speaking my sentiments in opposition to the bad practice of using words which ninety out of every hundred do not understand, and at the same time highly to commend those preachers whose good sense has long since taught them that the words of the speaker must ever be on a level with the comprehension of the hearer, to meet the intention and spirit of our tenth Topic, and the example of our Lord.

Our modern polite English is supposed to be greatly enriched by the introduction of an uncommon mass of Greek, Latin, and French terms, which are compounded and recomposed till they reach eight or ten syllables, to the wonderful delight of well-educated persons, in the study of the sciences, or in the perusal of works of taste; and, that this may nowhere be missing, it is to adorn the pulpit and establish the reputation of the preacher. As to literature and science, they shall have quiet possession of our modern vocabulary of words, but the pulpit is not to be subject to such innovation: these fascinating, unusual sounds ought not to be there heard, though the passion for introducing them may be manifest enough, and though many arguments are commonly advanced in favour of maintaining such a practice.

It will, however, be admitted that the words so imported into our language may be introduced into the pulpit where the congregations are almost exclusively well-educated. If they wish for this refinement, and are willing to pay for it, let them have it; but if the congregation be mixed, partly uneducated, the taste of the former must give way to the necessities of the latter as the weaker party, to whom our compassion is due: we must, like our great High Priest, "have compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way." Christ promised the poor the

Gospel *in perpetuum* in its purity. He himself preached to the poor in a style of address in which they received it gladly, because they understood it perfectly; nor did he alter his plain style when learned scribes, critical and severe, were about him. Therefore of what Christ has promised and bequeathed to the poor and ignorant, and left them as their patrimony, let no one deprive them. In pity and compassion Christ's servants must confirm the grant in its fulness. Many of this order of our people are suffering all the calamities of poverty and ignorance; therefore, in Christian feeling, which will cost nothing but a little humility and self-denial, give them a countervailing blessing; better seize their goods and chattels for rent, or serve them with Irish ejections, than keep from them a plain, intelligible gospel.

To this view of things one would think no objections could be urged; but such is the ingenuity of man to evade simplicity that superficial pleas are advanced of benefiting the gospel by what is called improved language. It is said that the cause of religion and the progress of the gospel are promoted by it, by subduing the prejudices of unconverted persons who are disgusted at the plainness, simplicity, and singular phraseology that accompany it in plain preachers. It is said that the modern style will remove the offence of the Cross. This is a mere figment of the imagination, and experience is against it; for until a man is convinced of sin—convinced that he is a guilty creature before God and justly liable to eternal death—he will ever remain prejudiced at the bottom of his heart, though he may attend the gospel, against a scheme that strikes at sin and self-sufficiency in all their forms, and that commends Christ as a complete Saviour to be relied on for salvation. Against this, let it be considered that Paul—who was as zealous, and as wise also, as any messenger of truth ever was—determined not to proceed upon this plan, 1 Cor. ii. 1—5. It is urged, again, that Paul was a learned man, and that he did actually use the wisdom given him in the promotion of the gospel cause, especially in his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. But how did he use his learning? Surely in throwing his divine light on the Old Testament scriptures, in his elaborate discussions on difficult points of divinity, in accumulating evidences of truth, and in tracing the principles of things (Topics XII. & XIX.): but, as to the medium of communication by language, he says that he would rather speak five words by which he might teach others than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue, preferring plainness and simplicity to a flowery bewitchery of speech that betrays the sacred cause to the misapprehension of the unlearned. No one who is at all acquainted with the real state of society will deny that a great number of our imported adopted words are unintelligible to our uneducated English people, who are ninety out of every hundred throughout Great Britain. Here then the wants of the educated and uneducated do actually come into collision; and surely, as Christians, we know in whose favour we are to decide; certainly in favour of the great mass of our population, whose salvation is of as much importance as that of the hundreds who would engross the ministry in their own favour, and devote the property which they are blessed with to secure that object, buying up the ministry, as votes have too often been bought to support an unfeeling aristocracy in politics.

I am no enemy to real eloquence; but foreign words are certainly not essential to it. Learning and science are at perfect liberty to adopt what words they please to promote them. If a minister preach to assemblies wholly educated, let him preach to them as such. If he must enter the polite circle, I suppose he must be like others. If he address a letter to a person of quality, his words as well as his style must comport with the occasion. If he write a book that is likely to pass into the drawing-rooms and libraries of polite people, let him throw all the ornaments he pleases into his composition. But if he condescend to preach to the uneducated, or even to mixed congregations, let him choose speech adapted to the understanding of the people. He ought so to speak that the most unlearned person in his presence may understand, nay, may not be able to misunderstand.

In opposition to this it is urged by some that, for the benefit and honour of the gospel, the refinement of the age renders refinement in ministers an affair of

necessity. This is hardly worth a serious answer ; every spiritual or true servant of our Lord Jesus Christ very well knows the points in which he ought to excel, and will, by the grace of Christ, do his utmost to meet the necessity of the case.

Other pleas might be noticed, but, "laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity ;" and I dismiss them for that which is of more importance.

The plainest language is the old Anglicized Saxon, now naturalized by the sanction of a thousand years, and mixed with words of the ancient Britons. This goes by the name of pure English, in distinction from the mixed English which is now prevailing, and has been since the introduction of such cumbrous commodities as are derived from the Greek, Latin, and French schools ; the progress of their introduction is accurately marked by Dr. Johnson.

The inhabitants of England, the Britons, when subdued by Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon conquerors, certainly did adopt, after a lapse of years (for such exchanges cannot be suddenly realized), a large share of the Saxon tongue, a dialect of the German, and here we find the origin of what we call pure or plain English. Our English, however, though improved by the Saxon, was in a very defective state through a paucity of words. It was not for a very considerable time committed to writing, because the people were not able to write ; such was our ancestors' degradation. The language bore all the marks and characters of its having originated with a rude people ; still it discovered a high capacity to express the feelings and passions of nature, whatever came under the cognizance of the senses and appetites, whatever was necessary to carry on war and bloodshed. It was ample enough also to express all rural and domestic employments, the endearments of family life, the intercourse of the sexes ; some of their expressions of this kind are said to possess exquisite sensibility. The powers of friendship had no need to smother in their breasts for want of expression. With such a language, defective as it was, the poet might throw his genius and imagination upon it, might extol the hero, or raise enchantment on the scenery of rural blessedness, to which their rude music might be added : and highly charmed, I suppose, we should have been to have heard their poetic numbers and the rude clang of culinary kettles and pans ; while these, with their vocal choruses, would make the woods ring, and frighten the wolves and foxes to distant retreats. But for the purposes of religion there was a total lack of words to clothe such ideas, except about their god Woden or Oden.

Time, no doubt, would effect some improvement ; but the great means of that improvement was found in the introduction of Christianity and the labours of Augustine. The Christian religion brought with it its own language—a mighty accession it was to the stock of words before existing in our country.

It then became necessary to give this scripture language a visible form by writing, that it might be read as well as heard, that it might be a text-book and a book of reference, the Saxon and ancient British being the vehicles to bear that form (for the Latin version then extant was of no use for purposes of instruction) ; and it appears by history that the book of Psalms was translated into Saxon (the general term), about the year 706. After this the four Gospels, about 721. Some years afterwards the rest of the scriptures were completed by the venerable Bede. This translation continued till the fourteenth century, when a new version, better suited to the age, was effected by the revered Wickliffe, which was no doubt a great improvement. An erroneous notion has prevailed that Wickliffe first translated the scriptures ; the truth is, his zeal against the church of Rome, whose avowed purpose was to conceal the scriptures, led him to revise and improve the old Saxon copies. He amended the style to meet some improvements of his times. He also went further, and consulting the Vulgate, he introduced many Latin terms, which are brought down to the present time, to the injury, as I think, of the original text. Still improvement was effected.*

[* On this subject, we would urge upon the student the careful perusal of the "Handbook of the English Tongue," by Dr. Angus ; and the "Student's Manual of the English Language," by Marsh, edited by Dr. Wm. Smith. Much pleasure and instruction will be derived from the perusal of the suggestive and graceful productions, Dr. Trench, on the "Study of Words," "English, Past and Present," &c.]

Without noticing other subsequent translations (for there were many), we shall close the list with what we call King James's Bible, which is that now in use among us. This was produced by a constellation of great and learned men, and, it seems, obtained the title of a new translation out of the original tongue. I cannot but look upon this title as a fallacy, for these translators had not only the older translation before them for their main guide, but they had also the Vulgate; and the veneration they paid to the Vulgate is evident to those who are capable of comparing the Vulgate with the Hebrew Bible. It is true that the Vulgate was not blindly followed, so that the damage was small in making use of it; yet the title was wrong: but the protestantism of the times would not allow the least public hint of any use made of a work essentially catholic.

We are, however, under no uneasiness as to our present translation; upon the whole, it is a good one, and now forms the true foundation of pure English language. We are not likely to get any further improvement in our text,* while the imported words are neither so numerous nor difficult to be understood but that our common uneducated people can, as to the letter of scripture, understand it; but further innovations in language, in our day, do incalculable mischief if brought into the pulpit. Among other reasons for discountenancing such innovations, I may mention the following:—

1. There is no need of new words; we have in our Bible a *copia verborum* well adapted for all religious purposes. Such is its copiousness, that no good thing remains untold. Every nation that has read the Bible in its pure form, if it has not been converted, has been enlightened above all other people. See what it did by the small part conveyed to the Jews in their infant state. God gave his word unto Jacob (Ps. cxlvii. 19), or they would have remained as other nations. He not only gave Egypt national and political power, but his *word*, which by a faithful translation we also possess. Besides what it historizes or narrates, the language of the law brought proper conceptions of the divine character and government—the expressions of the divine will; it also conveyed intimations of mysteries relating to redemption. The language of the Psalms brought the eloquence of piety. In the Proverbs we find maxims of wisdom. The Prophets gave sublimity to thought and views in anticipation of Jehovah's acts in time to come. In the language of the New Testament a further additional vocabulary was introduced, while the facts contained therein laid a foundation of faith and hope through the mediation of the Son of God. The whole is conveyed to us in clear characters in our English translation. Our Bible, therefore, is to be estimated by the work it performs—blessing the life that now is, and pointing to the future world, and this with very few modern importations. Hence I conclude that scripture forms a fit vocabulary of religious words.

2. These scriptures are the better fitted for this purpose as they are now cleared, or nearly so, of vulgarisms and obsolete words; these had not their origin from the Hebrew, but in the translation, which followed the common understanding of the times. Further, in our copy of Holy Writ the rules of language are so far observed that it has been justly said the Bible adheres more closely to the rules of composition than any other work of its own date.

3. The stock of words provided in the scriptures will enable the preacher to speak classically, elegantly, and eloquently; and, though deprived of foreign stock, he will still retain his utmost skill of giving advantage to his conceptions by perspicuity of arrangement, happy construction of sentences, a judicious choice of words, and agreeable and harmonious periods. He will still be at liberty to give all the grace of delivery, as suggested in my remarks on the fifteenth Topic. Thus, while he delights his audience, he will only use such words as common people understand.

4. As this plain language admits of beauty, so it is also capable of strength, for

* [Since this was written, we have had the results of the labours of Hahn on the Old Testament, and those of Scholz, Lochmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Scrivener on the New, not to mention the more generally known, but less original, labours of Dean Alford on the text in his useful Greek Testament.]

the old English is capable of expressing the most violent feelings of the mind, or the most pathetic. Nay, it is capable of sublimity also, for sublimity does not consist in pompous words, but in the thought itself: pompous words may delight the ear, but they do not produce such a true elevation of soul as short words, mostly monosyllables (and of such the old language generally consists); while foreign words, compounded and doubly compounded, impede the current of thought and rob the subject of its proper energy. The least attention to scripture language, and that of nature, will supply all the evidence that is necessary to the proof of this point. Even our poets and orators of feeling and sensibility have always been aware of this; and, though the common strain of their language may have been refined, yet, if they had an affair of the heart to treat of respecting these points, they turned for the occasion to the wording of pure nature; and here they pay deference to what I recommend.

5. It is to be observed that as water is purer near the spring, so language is the purer the further it is traced into antiquity. Here, with veneration, we approach the Hebrew language, as that which God himself taught to man (for this opinion we have very high authority); then it follows that that which God taught was sure to be expressive of the things to be spoken. For language to be expressive is its highest praise on all occasions; I am sure it is so, then, in the pulpit. The principal Hebrew words, terms, names of animals and things, found in our Bible, express the *qualities* which the words stand for, or some supposed relationship which they bear to the original Hebrew roots under consideration. This distinctness of identity might be supposed to be lost in the translation, but in the case before us the Saxon language performs the duty of a faithful conveyancer, to preserve the true sense of the original, and convey it to our own translation; for it is an undeniable fact that the Saxon and the whole of the German dialects do, in like manner with the Hebrew, convey in their words and appellatives the properties and qualities of the things represented by such words. So then the original expressiveness of the Hebrew is not lost, but retained, to give a proud pre-eminence to our old English.*

Next to such words as are found in the scriptures, the whole range of plain words, as furnished by our dictionaries, and plain compositions in general, such as I may point out, are to be adopted; and, when these are ranged together in sentences, the light of truth is seen, and its power is felt, to the great advantage of nearly ninety out of every hundred throughout England. From such preaching the uneducated derive information, edification, and consolation, through a medium of communication suited to the slender acquirements of their state, high and heavenly things are brought down to their comprehension, the plentiful rain of divine truth descends to refresh a weary inheritance, Ps. lxxviii. 9.

6. As a further argument, our experience convinces us that there is an indescribable attraction attending the study and reading of the word of God: it steals upon our hearts, or distils like the dew upon Mount Hermon; it harmonizes with our feelings; its very words strike out extensive meanings, conveying ideas of qualities within the words themselves of vast extent; and hence it is so well adapted as a text-book, and opens subjects to preachers beyond any other composition.

7. This is not a mere weak partiality, or the overweening of a pious mind. That consummate critic, Mr. A. Blackwall, says, "The Old Testament is the richest treasury of all the sublimity of thought, moving tenderness of passion, and vigorous strength of expression (by means of its most fitting words) which is to be found in all the language by which mortals convey their thoughts. . . . The Hebrew is an original and essential language, that borrows of none, but lends to all. Some of the sharpest pagan writers, inveterate enemies to the religion and learning of both Jews and Christians, have always allowed the Hebrew language

* [The simplicity of this may provoke a smile. It is now well known that these views are baseless, while the student has only to refer to any of the Bible Cyclopædies, or to Kitchin's Pictorial Bible, to see how much in these matters our version needs revision. On the general subject of revision, the reader may profitably refer to Craik on the Hebrew Language, Dr. Trench on the Revision of the New Testament, and Dr. Beard on the Revision of the English Bible.]

to have a noble emphasis and a close and beautiful brevity. The metaphors in that admirable work are apposite and lively; they illustrate the truths expressed by them, and raise the admiration of the reader. The names of men, animals, &c., &c., are very significant; one *word* is often a good description, and gives you a satisfactory account of the chief and distinguishing property or quality of the thing or person named.*

You will observe that this excellent critic fixes up the very *word* of scripture, and extracts wonderful sense and meaning. Now, if this language be so valuable, and if beauties are transfused into our old English, and the essence of that old stock still retained in our King James's Bible, we have there a language of unspeakable worth. The preacher, for his private enjoyment, if a man of taste, may indulge his imagination with the finest poetry in the world in the most simple dress; for his public use he can show most intelligibly how to make all nature speak,—to speak instruction,—to speak the praises of God who formed things to be signs of moral and spiritual ideas.

It will not much diminish the student's pleasure to find that the most material part of our old English (next to the Saxon) is derived from the ancient British. We shall never doubt the energy of British feeling and language: this is associated with the love of our country, of our fireside, of all our social endearments. Never, then, let us slight, but cherish, a vehicle of communication recommended by such high considerations, the British part descending to us through such a long line of ancestry—the wording formed of British and Saxon texture—the truths themselves from the everlasting Jehovah, by him given to Adam, from Adam to the Patriarchs, passing down to Moses, the Prophets, Apostles, &c., and so transfused into pure English.

If I had the eloquence of Demosthenes, how would I press upon every true minister of Jesus Christ immediately to commence the study of pure old English! Some, to their honour, have always used it. Let us be all of one mind to establish its use by our practice, accompanying plain terms with a superior manner and an elegant enunciation (fifteenth Topic), free from an antiquated style. I wish for no peculiar phraseology, not a quakerish mode, nor an attempt at scriptural *style*, because that style could not be maintained, it being inimitable. I want a modern medium, such as a plain man now commonly speaks to another upon common affairs; but quotations must be correct, and unvaried from the text. I want nothing further in this direction. I wish this plain language to have all the ornaments of modern refinement, for it is only required that the *words* be as pure as possible. I say pure as possible, for some of another class of words must be admitted, and many new words, we are sure, can be perfectly understood by their long use, or by their belonging to ideas that are familiarized to even country people by often-talked-of inventions, as about railways, steam operations, machinery of all kinds. But to make doctrines plain which are expressed by Latinisms, &c., they must be fully unfolded, or turned into plain English. I cannot, I need not, mark all the words which will require care to be understood, but I certainly think that, in the view of this Essay, you would not, in speaking of the adorable perfections and attributes of the Divine nature, perplex ignorant people by using such terms as *infinity*, *immutability*, *omnipresence*, and *omniscience*, but that you would exchange these, however uncouth they may appear, to, *without bounds*, *unchangeable*, *everywhere present*, *all-powerful*, *all-seeing*, *all-knowing*, &c. Other words may, without explanation or exchange, be used discreetly; if such stand in a sentence connected with several other words well understood, the words known will interpret the unknown, or, though in some cases a foreign word occurs, yet, if it has had a long standing in the Bible or Prayer-book, the difficulty will not be felt.

I would urge the adoption of pure English upon you, my dear companions in the service of the best of Lords, because of its sterling propriety and weight. The matter of our embassy being settled, then, in point of order, comes the words by which it is to be conveyed; and, while regard is to be had in such words to the dignity of the Sovereign who sends, attention must be paid to the character, qua-

* Blackwall's Sacred Classics.

lity, and understanding of the nation or people sent to—that the words may be well understood,* not merely understood by the court, but by the country, since both are equally interested in the embassy. If the tidings we have to communicate be intended to make the nation happy, the nation in all its grades should be made clearly acquainted with them. It is no small recommendation of this practice that the necessary acquaintance with plain language is of easy attainment. I do not recommend to you the study of Arabic, that you might collate your scriptures with the Arabic Bible; this would be a task of some difficulty, and you might plead that you had not time for it. But as the servants of Naaman urged, to recommend compliance with the prophet's remedy, that the thing was *easy*—it was only a step down into Jordan and a cure would be effected—so here you have only “to condescend to men of low estate,” and the object will be attained; or, if unexpectedly this plain or pure English should be found difficult at first, all difficulty will soon be overcome. Read works that are remarkable for plainness. Do not object to them because not found on the shelves of the polite or learned, nor object to the name of their authors because you may be told they wrote for the nursery or the cottage. Go back to former times—measure your steps backward from the degree of your present attainments, and unlearn what has cost you much labour to learn, and thus acknowledge that you have mis-spent much time as well as labour. Part with what you have got; let it go, and God will give you twice as much in true wisdom and holy zeal for the improvement of the wretched and unlearned, whom you cannot see perish for lack of knowledge. The books that I have examined for this purpose are the following, which I recommend for your perusal:—Bunyan's first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan, whom Dr. Johnson highly extols, has in this work brought vast conceptions, noble thoughts, and ingenious similitudes, into the plainest words that the dictionary gives us. Next, Defoe's first part of *Robinson Crusoe*, and also his *Family Instructor*. Let it be remembered that that these works are recommended chiefly on account of their *language*. Defoe was a great man, a wise man, a good man. One part of his *Crusoe* was a true history, the rest allegory; but both are highly instructive. Dr. Adam Clarke began life with these books as books of Entertainment, and ended life with admiration of their excellences. Bishop Beveridge's *Sermons* bring you nearer to the pulpit style, and are most admirably plain. A moderate share of attention to these and similar works will give you facility in the acquirement of pure English.

As you ought fearlessly to adopt pure English, so you stand encouraged to it by the authority and practice of some of the greatest names in literature and divinity. Dean Swift was a man of gigantic though perverted mind. A great critic said that he “never used a derived or foreign word where an English one could be found,” and this perhaps accounts for the great popularity of his works—his *Gulliver's Travels*, his *Tale of a Tub*, and his *Drapier's Letters*. I have some of his letters now before me, and they confirm the character above given of his writings. You have also the name of the great Dr. South, who was a true Englishman. He disdained to use a foreign word, unless compelled to it. Dr. Adam Clarke I may claim as an advocate of pure language. Dr. Watts, in his poetry and psalms, &c., often uses language as plain as possible. Next, but not least, I have Robert Hall, as to his opinion of plain language, though he did not avail himself very often of its aid. In Dr. Olinthus Gregory's *Life of Hall* occurs the following conversation:—

“In one of our interviews with Mr. Hall, I used the word *felicity* three or four times. He asked, ‘Why do you say *felicity*? happiness is a better word, more musical, and common English, coming from the Saxon.’ ‘Not more musical, I think, Sir.’ ‘Yes, more musical, and so are all the words derived from the Saxon generally. Listen, Sir: *My heart is smitten and withered like grass*. There is plaintive music for you. Listen again, Sir: *Under the shadow of thy wings will I*

* See the Marquis of Sligo's Address at Jamaica, published in England, in the public papers, in July 1834; the plainness of that address is a complete illustration of the point in hand.

rejoice. There's cheerful music.' 'Yes, but *rejoice* is French.' 'True; but all the rest is Saxon, and *rejoice* is almost out of tune with the rest. Listen again, Sir: *Thou hast delivered my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling*—all Saxon except *delivered*. I could think of the word *tear*, Sir, till I wept. Then for another noble specimen of the good old Saxon English: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*'"

And now, fellow-labourers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, the representation is before you, my reasoning, authorities, and examples. The ninety out of every hundred immortal beings wait to be blessed with truth that they can understand. Fear not the charge of singularity; the Redeemer, whom you will imitate, will secure your reputation, ensure your usefulness, and own your name with honour in the solemn day of account.

NO. II.

CONNEXION BETWEEN THEOLOGICAL STUDY AND PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

It has not fallen within the plan of the foregoing Lectures to trace the connexion between theological study and pulpit eloquence, though some occasional hints have occurred which bear upon it. This subject, which certainly is one of great importance to the student, has been recently discussed in a very luminous manner by E. A. Park, Bartlet professor in the Theological Seminary of Andover, United States, and, as his Essay is not likely to be in many hands in this country, I cannot perform a more useful service than that of giving it a place in this appendix, without, however, pledging myself to every sentiment it contains:—

"Every art is founded on some science, and every science is connected with some other science; it follows, then, that every art is connected with all the sciences, and every science with all the arts. This connexion is sometimes almost imperceptible, and is always more or less intimate as the science or art is more or less extensive. Theology comprehends all other sciences as its tributaries, and with a generous reciprocity diffuses through them all a genial influence; it derives illustrations from all arts, and returns a singular and sometimes scarcely visible aid in the prosecution of all. The intricate and complex theory of law would be more clearly elucidated if our lawyers were better theologians, and their pleas would be more perspicuous and cogent if they were more fully based on the science of the God of equity. The structure of the human frame would be more thoroughly understood if our physicians were more conversant with the analogies which may be traced between the object so fearfully made and Him who so wonderfully made it; and they would practise with more safety and skill if their minds were more elevated, and their hearts more purified, by those principles which, though but faintly traced in all the emanations, are exhibited perfectly in the universal Source. If theology renders such important service to other sciences and other arts, it must be pre-eminently serviceable to the science and the art of pulpit eloquence; and the preacher must feel that his success in preaching depends not on his graces of delivery, or his beauties of style, so much as on his enlarged and familiar acquaintance with the principles of religion.

"In the first place, theological study conduces to the preacher's eloquence because it conduces to his greatest vigour of mind and heart. If the mind is strengthened by exercise, it must be strengthened by exercise on themes of theology as much as on other themes. If it is invigorated by grappling with intricacies and abstrusities, it certainly can find no science so healthful as that which must, from its very nature, tax and task the whole soul. The mathematics will yield to theology in their tendency to discipline the intellect. A distinguished barrister of our day, who has but little faith in evangelical doctrines, recommends to his law students the frequent perusal of the volumes which discuss those doctrines, because nowhere else can be found such invigorating argument on such elevating theories. Indeed the very allusion to the ideas of God, eternity, holiness, is sufficient to

show that whoever comes into contact with them must be intellectually quickened and expanded. If intellectually, still more so morally. Religious affections, not less than any other, are strengthened by exercise ; and these affections are exercised only upon themes directly or indirectly theological. He who communes with the truth of God, employs the means of spiritual growth. This truth has a singular and various use ; it is the soul's sunshine and aliment, its rain and dew, and also its shelter and resting-place. It is not by the bare formation of his sentences, and penning of his paragraphs, that the writer of a sermon stimulates his religious purpose ; it is by incorporating with himself the theological ideas which constitute the gem of which the sermon is the casket. An excellent clergyman of New England, who, when compelled by old age to abandon pulpit ministrations, continued to write his two sermons every week, simply with the intent of preserving the warmth of religious feeling by close contact with religious truth, illustrated the experience of every faithful pastor, that spiritual enlargement results from no study as it does from the study of pulpit addresses, and it results not from the rhetoric of these addresses, but from the theology of them.

"The vigour of mind and heart which is gained from doctrinal investigation is the mainspring of effective preaching. The eloquence of the pulpit is the eloquence of thought. A feeble mind can no more wield this thought than the stripling shepherd could wield the armour of Saul. Warmth of emotion in the pulpit will not diffuse itself through the pews, unless the great object of that emotion be distinctly and vividly exhibited ; and the preacher cannot exhibit what he does not fully possess. He cannot write with interest and zeal, nor can he with earnestness and energy deliver what he has written, unless he understand and feel the great bearings of his theme. He may goad up his animal susceptibilities to an intense excitement ; he may saw the air and distort his visage, and beat the pulpit cushion, and stamp with his foot, and thunder with his voice ; but this is not the animation which hearers wish or want. Rational, educated minds will smile at his nervous agitation and vapid remark, and will demand the excitement which is kindled by thought, and will sympathize profitably with none but intelligent emotion. When he is preaching on eternity, on the judgment, on the divine justice in eternal retributions, it will be easy to distinguish between his antic gestures or vehement contortions of face and that serious solemn eloquence which would be breathed into him by the deep study of those doctrines. Nothing but such deep study can impart the true sober energy, the considerate reasonable excitement, which, wherever seen, is power. The speaker may practise before his mirror, and learn to raise his hand gracefully and explode vowels forcibly, but, without intense thought on the matter of his discourses, all the rules in the world will never make him eloquent, and with this intense thought awakening appropriate emotion he will be eloquent without a single other rule. Other rules are useful : they make the body. This rule is essential : it makes the soul. The soul will live without the body ; the body is putrefaction without the soul ; both together make the man.

"A distinguished fanatic who had been tenderly nursed during a long sickness at the house of a friend, and who felt sincerely grateful for the kind attentions of that friend, was asked on the morning of his departure, to lead in social prayer. He prayed with his wonted boisterousness, until he began to pour out his thanksgiving for the assiduous care of his host ; then a subdued manner and a still small voice usurped the place of vehemence and noise. 'I knew,' said his friend, 'that my guest felt thankful and attached to me ; and it was his deep feeling that lowered his tones and repressed the turbulence of his nerves. When therefore he was not so calm I inferred that he had not so much feeling ; and the part of his prayer which was most sincere was that which was least impetuous.' Let us not deceive ourselves. The fitfulness of nervous excitation is distinct from the sober emotion of the heart ; the rhodomontade in the pulpit is easily distinguished from the eloquent expounder of truth. Children, young or old, may be amused with a vociferous declaimer, as they would be with a fire-eater or wire-tumbler, but even children will not be inspired by him with solemn conviction, but will turn from him with the vague feeling that something or other is wanting, and can only say

of their preacher's oratory what was once said of a different kind of disturbance of the peace, 'A tumult, my lord ; but I know not the meaning thereof' If Campbell's definition of eloquence be just, that it is the 'art or talent by which a discourse is adapted to its end,' there can be no sacred eloquence which does not more than amuse, more than interest, more than astonish ; it must illuminate, and with its light which cheers must emit the heat which melts.

"There is a second mode in which theological study increases the eloquence of the preacher ; it gives him a proper confidence in himself and his ministrations. A minister should not be arrogant and presumptuous, neither should he be crest-fallen and craven. True self-respect is the ground of true humility, and the same knowledge which imparts the former imparts also the latter. A man is as much entitled to respect himself as to respect others, and a minister has as much right as any other man to form the merited estimate of his own character. Besides, he is authorized to regard himself as a messenger from God, and, in imitation of that inspired model of preachers who never disparaged his high calling, he is bound to say in word and in life, 'I magnify my office.' Who among his hearers can vie in importance with the preacher of the gospel ? Physicians, jurists, statesmen, must bow themselves before the pulpit, and must yield their dignified obeisance to him who is distinguished by the appellation, 'the mouth of God.' He who is the *instructor* of his audience, the spiritual father perhaps of many of them, the guide and counsellor of all, should not appear before them in a crouching posture, as if it were a great favour and honour to him that they will deign to lend their ears ; he should not speak as if he were about to apologize for troubling them with his words, or 'beg pardon for having been born.' No ; he should stand up like a man, and speak like a man, and let it be known that he is a man, yea, more than a man—a preacher. Then will his words come with authority. Then will the hearers look up to him. But no minister will speak with that confidence which is neither too great nor too small, but just right, unless he have the mastery of his subject.

"There is something in the very consciousness of understanding his doctrine which gives him the appropriate boldness of utterance. He feels that he can teach his hearers. However striking their superiority over him in many things, he feels that in the most important of all things he has, as he ought to have, superiority over them. He can make the wisest of them more wise. He can reprove the most learned of them for their ignorance of the one thing needful. It will be a feast for the oldest of them to hang upon his lips, even though he be on the green side of mature age. This will not make him vain ; if so, he has a peculiar reason to be humble, and may be sure that he has not the qualifications for an occupant of his high office. The truth properly proportioned never ministers to vanity ; truth, whatever it be, does good and no evil at all to him who comprehends it ; and it is one great requisite of a preacher that he be able to look at truth just as it is—the whole truth respecting himself—and be quickened by it to cry aloud and spare not, and be emboldened to 'show himself a man.'

"Again, theological knowledge gives the proper degree of confidence to the preacher because it discloses the adaptedness of his themes to the moral nature of his hearers. By fully understanding a doctrine the minister may understand how it operates on the heart, and by understanding how it operates he feels confidence in the utility of preaching it. He is like a mechanic using sharp tools in broad daylight ; if he were in the dark, he would move with faint-hearted and wavering uncertainty, but in the sunshine he knows how and where he is cutting, and strikes his chisel with confidence that it will cleave not merely the thin air. When a preacher sees the nature and the tendency of his doctrine he feels a mysteriously imparted expectation of success in enforcing it. He feels a rational animating faith that the Holy Spirit will comply with the laws of mental action, and accompany the means which are so happy in their tendencies with the influence which is needed to develop those tendencies in saving results. He feels, when he enters the sacred desk, that he is to do something, and this assurance of success, as it increases his reliance upon the ultimate source of all success, increases also his vigour, and manliness, and life.

"Still further, there is something in the very nature of theological truth which gives confidence to the preacher. It opens, enlarges, and vivifies the mind. There is a clearness in truth, a directness and a freshness in it, which strangely disenthral the spirit, and gives free, full scope. Truth favours freedom—freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of act. Revealed by the same God who made the soul and all the laws of the soul, it harmonizes with these laws, moves along with them easily and happily, and jars with the mind only when the mind puts constraint upon itself and jars with its own principles. The mind was made for truth, and of course sympathizes with it wherever found. When wounded and bruised, it glides instinctively to truth, as the serpent, when self-poisoned, is said to hasten for the curative leaf. It has a kindly feeling towards all truth, and rejoices in it as a brother, and, when torn from it, pines away as a dove mourning its mate. It is the heart only which is disloyal and disorganizing, and impresses the intellect into a rebellion as injurious as it is unnatural. Still the mind, even when carried captive by a depraved will, looks back with yearnings to its native land; and wherever truth points there the mind points, unless forcibly held down; and wherever truth stays there the mind stays, unless forcibly driven on. The words of the philosophical poet may be well applied to the secret union between the mind and evangelical doctrine, two emanations from the same source:—

'Twas thus, if ancient fame the truth unfold,
Two faithful needles from th' informing touch
Of the same parent stone, together drew
Its mystic virtue, and at first conspired
With fatal impulse quivering to the pole;
Then, though disjoined by kingdoms, though the main
Rolled its broad surge betwixt, and diff'rent stars
Beheld their wakeful motions, yet preserved
The former friendship, and remembered still
Th' alliance of their birth. Whate'er the line
Which one possessed, nor pause nor quiet knew
The sure associate ere with trembling speed
He found its path, and fixed unerring there.*

"Point to any man who in his preaching is fettered with doubts, trammelled with consciousness of impotency, moves with halting step, utters his doctrine in long periphrases, and explains about it and about it, and well nigh bespeaks pity for it, and never thrusts it home with energy and courage upon the conscience and the heart, and I strongly suspect that the man does not understand the gospel. 'You shall know the truth,' says Jesus, 'and the truth shall make you free,' and 'where the Spirit of the Lord is,' says Paul, 'there is liberty.' I love to see a preacher deeply imbued with the impression that he is a moral being and his hearers are moral beings, and that he must aim at moral effects by moral means, that he has something to do and his hearers have something to do, and that they must do *their* duty immediately and he must do *his* duty fearlessly; for this impression is in harmony with actual fact, and he who makes this impression a part of his own soul 'shall be free indeed.' It is an old proverb, 'Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself;' and so when a minister looks, and speaks, and acts, as if he respected himself as a moral agent, and revered his official elevation, and had full faith in the efficacy of that sword which he wields, but which is nevertheless the sword of the Spirit, and when he applies doctrine with an untied hand and trustful heart, as well as with meekness and love, then will his people praise him; and the way to praise a minister is to attend to him and profit by him.

"There is a third mode in which a minister improves his eloquence by extensive theological investigation: he acquires by it the respect and confidence of his people. A bishop, says Paul, 'must have a good report of those who are without;' and an orator, says Cicero, must be confided in as a good man, or his oration will exert but diminished influence. The preacher must make objective as well as subjective preparations; for the most finished sermon will fall upon an unprepared audience as Priam's spear upon the buckler of Neoptolemus. It is

* Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination, b. iii.

a wise remark of Hooker, 'Let Phidias have rude and obstinate stuff to carve, though his art do that it should his work will lack that beauty which otherwise in fitter matter it might have had. He that striketh on an instrument with skill, may cause, notwithstanding, a very unpleasant sound, if the string whereon he striketh chance to be incapable of harmony.'"* When an audience depreciate their minister's ability to instruct them, their very prejudice will convert his eloquence into inanity; and, moreover, he will find it beyond his power to attain such eloquence before hearers who turn the cold shoulder to the pulpit, as before those who turn the eager eye and the open breast. If therefore the preacher aim at efficiency in the pulpit, he must divert the power of popular prejudice to his own favour, as the skilful pilot watches wind and tide, so as to be wafted along by the same elements which would otherwise resist him. The preacher must appear to be pious and intelligent, and the only way of appearing to be so is to be so. It is more than one age too late to acquire the respect of a congregation by superficial and common-place teaching. Simple truths are on the wings of the wind—our popular religious literature has carried them to every man's fire-side. The churches demand a higher instruction and an ampler reasoning from the pulpit than can be gleaned from the narratives of the nursery. They may be pleasing for a time with the pleasant voice and the pathetic tale, but like the prodigal they will soon turn from the husks, and long for more nutritive aliment though presented in a homelier dish. Even the child who early learns to sing,

I hate that drum's discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round,

will soon loathe the emptiness, and inflation, and circumvolutions of the discourse which rings in his ears just as monotonously as the drum, because it is filled with just the same substance. The bare belief that a preacher has no excellence but that of elocution, and no grace but that of attitude, will soon degrade his authority; while the bare belief that he is a consummate theologian will invest his teachings with commanding importance. Men who are not thinkers wish to be addressed as if they were. Unlettered men do not wish to have their minister imply by his style that he is making a great effort to become simple enough for their comprehension. The preacher who appointed a service for the lower classes and the ignorant of his flock had 'fit audience, though few.' The hearer who complained that he did not receive his 'money's worth' at church, because his pastor, instead of preaching in the Greek language, which he had understood to be a superior one, preached only in the English, which even poor men used without salaries, uttered the language of many, who demand that a sermon be elaborate, even if they be less capable than they choose to be reputed, of comprehending its instructions. But I do not wish to underrate the popular intelligence. It is a fact that all mind craves thought. Even indolent men love excitement, and even wicked men are interested in logical and eloquent exhibitions of evangelical doctrine. All the faculties—reason, judgment, imagination, memory—find congenial exercise on the truths which God has fitted to them, as he has fitted food to the stomach and light to the eye. When Dr. Griffin was preaching his most pungent discourses in Boston, on such themes as election and free-will, the depravity of man and sovereignty of God, his church was frequented by men who disbelieved and disliked his doctrine. As they retired from one service they would resolve not to expose themselves to the excitements of another, but the next sabbath eve would find the opposing yet eager listeners again at Park-street, not because they wished to go, but because they could not stay away, because their consciences found something vigorous to grapple with and their whole moral nature was met exactly in its importunings. So urgently and ceaselessly does the human constitution demand the truth for which it was originally framed, that nothing but a varied and harmonious exhibition of this truth can be permanently satisfying. If error satisfy in sickness, it will not in health; if in prosperity, not in adversity. Those old principles of mind which rejoiced together before the fall, though they may

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol i.

slumber for a season after they have bidden farewell to truth, will yet rise up at last with a voice of lamentation and mourning, as Rachel rose in Rama, weeping for her children because they were not.

"The preacher who is but poorly indoctrinated may write on a single subject without an exposure of his poverty; but when he writes on some other subject, he will be apt to show that his mind has no capacity to contain more than one thing at a time, and he will forfeit the confidence of his more discerning hearers by his self-contradictions. He does not discern the relations of truths, sees but a small distance before him, disparages to-day what he magnifies to-morrow, and preaches on one doctrine so as to nullify another. When expounding the text, 'my yoke is easy,' he represents the ease of religion in terms so unqualified that repentance seems like the facile movement of the eyelid; but when expounding the text, 'strive to enter in at the strait gate,' he represents the agonizing of religion as surpassing even the fabled labours of Sisyphus. When preaching on the *unworthiness* of Christians, he describes them as meriting no praise for their piety, because all piety, being exercised under an influence from Heaven, must be ascribed to that influence and not to all the active subjects of it. But, when preaching on the *duty* of Christians, he will say that they are free in their holy as well as their sinful feelings, that all their acts are their own, and that their moral agency is not suspended or mutilated by the influences of the Spirit. If then they are moral and not passive Christians, if their acts are their own, if their repentance is not God's repentance, why, the hearer will ask, are they not praiseworthy? And then this same preacher, when portraying the *guilt of sinners*, will describe them as the bond-slaves of Satan, and will declare that the influence of the fallen spirit does not in the least exculpate those who yield to him, but that sinners are moral creatures, and their guilt can never be transferred from themselves to the agents, to him the tempter. But why, the hearer will again ask, does a foreign influence leave a man unworthy of praise and yet worthy of blame? Why does not the same cause—an extraneous operation—produce in either case the same effect, the destruction of moral accountability? In almost every audience there are some who will detect this tergiversation, and will complain of their pastor as one who sacrifices truth to popular effect, and bends all science, human and divine, to his purpose of moulding in his own way the hearts of his people. These discerning hearers will diffuse their objection through the undiscerning mass, and many will learn to look upon their religious guide, not as a vicegerent of Jehovah, standing on the sure word of revelation, but as a personal adviser and reprover, standing on his own ingenuity; they will lose their respect for him so soon as they divest him of the divine mantle, and will parry his self-invented remonstrances as with a shield of brass.

"Fourthly, theological study is important for the preacher's eloquence because it secures to his ministrations appropriateness and variety. Appropriateness depends upon variety; for the wants of the soul are varied, and sermons adjusted to these wants must be correspondently varied. Not only must divers characters be diversely treated, but the same individual must have different susceptibilities appealed to, different emotions excited, so that the entire soul may be edified. By various instruction he will be trained not a Christian monster, but a Christian man. Is it not a law of intellectual education to exercise all the faculties? So is it the law of moral education to exercise all the graces, and they cannot all be exercised by one style of preaching, more than all the mental faculties by one subject of study. Dieteticians tell us that we must have a variety in our food or lose vigour of body, and that those tribes who confine their diet to a single article, however nutritious it may be, are stunted and short-lived. What must be the state, then of the spiritual system which is fed from some pulpits, sabbath after sabbath, year after year, by one and the same kind of nutriment? It will be thought so, but it is not extravagant to say that there are ministers who discourse nearly fifty sabbaths of the year on only two or three subjects. Whatever their text, whatever their introduction, whatever their purpose, they slide into the same hackneyed strain. Their minds have worn a channel, and flow into it naturally and

of course. Not that they always use the same words, or adopt the same plan, but the whole genius of their sermons is the same, and losing the individual characteristic of every doctrine, they merge it into one tiresome generality. A late president of a college in New England said that he sat seventeen years under a very pious preacher, and yet heard from him only four sermons, one thanksgiving sermon, one fast sermon, one funeral sermon, and one general sermon. The hyperbole of this criticism is not so great as may at first appear; for perhaps there is no department of literature which, in proportion to the amount of mind professedly devoted to it, is so monotonous as the homiletic. Our inquisitive laymen too often complain that their pastor brings out of his treasury things old and old. It is well that their Athenian restlessness 'to hear some new thing' be sometimes rebuked, but some ministers rebuke it by continually disappointing it. Their public prayers are but one prayer, which many in their parishes have learned by rote, and an analysis of their sermons would develop a want, greater than any one suspects, of individuality, freshness, and that fertile variety without which the speaker cannot be appropriate and the hearer will not keep awake.

"Let us analyze three sermons, which are no caricatures, but sober specimens of a style of preaching exhibited in more than one pulpit or even printed volume.

"The subject of the first sermon is sorrow for sin, and the divisions are three: first, the duty is commanded; secondly, the neglect of it will be punished; thirdly the performance of it will be rewarded; and under the last division are depicted the beatific glories which will ensue from this sorrow. Every idea which the author advances is correct, but yet a minute and thorough analysis of his theme would have shown him that he had overlooked the peculiar sympathies of it, and that his cheering portraiture of paradise must be abridged, or else be out of keeping with his good design. How can he raise tears of distress by a bright painting of happiness as the reward of distress? For the next sermon he selects a different theme, the duty of Christian cheerfulness, and advances the three positions: first, God has commanded the duty; secondly, will reward the performance of it; thirdly, will punish the neglect of it; and he portrays the misery of despair as the result of refusing to obey the command, 'Rejoice in the Lord.' If this be not true, what is? Doubtless it is all true; but a more radical study of the truth would have detected more of its genius and harmonies. Had the preacher penetrated into the recesses of his doctrine, and lived there, breathing its peculiar spirit, he might indeed have glanced at the woes of those who would neglect this duty, but he would not have held his hearers long in an atmosphere so ill suited to diffuse the glow of cheerfulness. Every subject has its finger, and the finger points to something congenial with it; and certainly the subject of Christian tranquillity does not point to the lake of gloom and the gnawing worm as the things with which it is most congenial. Nor, indeed, does it point, first and foremost, to the idea that God has commanded cheerfulness. The nature of a command is not so homogeneous as that of some other objects with the nature of serenity. To bring down all at once the imposing ideas of law and duty upon the delicate, spontaneous, unchained emotion of joy, is like cherishing the growth of a sensitive plant by grating on it with a file and saw. It is like calling forth the whispering music of an *Æolian* harp by dashing it with an iron bar. It is all right and all important that the preacher should tell men of the law of rejoicing and of the penalties of disobedience; but this is not the sympathetic, natural, and easy development which will leave the hearers rejoicing, and thus perfect the persuasion of the preacher. His sermon may have other aims, but, if its aim be to excite the commended emotion, it should be a placid, sunny sermon, the topics and the style in sweet harmony with the theme, and every sentence should be penned with the feeling that whatever else men may be scolded into they will, perhaps, be scolded into petulance as soon as into cheerfulness.

"But for the third sermon the preacher, for the sake of variety, selects a theme as different as need be from the two preceding, but again calls in the rhetorician's charmed number of topics, 'three.' God has commanded the duty,

will punish the neglect, reward the performance of it. But what is the subject which is to be laid down upon this standard triangle? It is this: the duty of men to make their chief object of pursuit neither their own joy nor their own sorrow, but the glory of God. Where now is the propriety of urging us to regard our own joy as subordinate, by a prominent reference to the eternal joy which will reward disinterestedness? and how does the instruction that we comparatively overlook our own sorrow, sympathise with the protracted threatening of everlasting sorrow as the punishment of undue self-love? It is nothing but a severe meditation on the nature of this subject which will disclose its rhetorical as distinct from its theological truth. The fact is that though the third sermon should have a peculiar identity, it is in its essential spirit a repetition of the second, as the second is of the first. The three sermons are one in their main outline: the duty of obeying God, avoiding misery, obtaining happiness, is the one subject; and although the subject is differently illustrated in each of the sermons, as it would be in thirty more, it renders each a stiff, formal, mechanical discourse. There is not a duty in the whole moral code but may be and often is recommended by the same stationary divisions. But why stretch everything on one bed? Why not detect the idiosyncrasy of a doctrine, its spirit, aptitude, and peculiar suggestions? Nature has not given water a red colour or a sweet taste, because this sameness would annoy us. Physicians say that a change even from the better to the good is often necessary, because it is a change. But we ask of a preacher merely that he vary with his subject, that he watch its flowings forth and follow them, that he wait and muse until he be borne along by the tendencies of his doctrine over all his plans, and skeletons, and technicalities. There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and one star differeth from another star in glory. There is in man an innate love of novelty, which, so far as constitutional should be conformed to by the preacher. He need not fear; for there is a richness and abundance in theology which will answer to every cry of the soul. No chord vibrates in our bosoms, but a chord of scriptural truth may vibrate in unison or else in fitness. It is the study of this truth, then, that is to uncover the springs of eloquence, and it is the first rule of sacred rhetoric to recommend this study. A complete theologian, one who takes in the essence, and the bearings, and the inspiration, and the life of theology, is the only model of pulpit eloquence. He cannot open his mouth on his favourite science without showing that he, rather than Plato, was the man 'upon whose lips the bees dropped honey as he lay in his cradle.' Cicero says that 'if Jupiter should converse with men he would talk in the language of Plato;' but we know, for the phenomenon has been observed, that when Jehovah converses with men, he speaks in the language of the theologian, or rather the theologian but re-echoes the eloquent words of the Divinity.

"Fifthly, theological study is essential to sacred eloquence, because it discloses the precise truths which are fitted to renovate the heart. Truth is God's; the soul is God's. One, being made for the other, is adapted to it as the tenon to the mortice. A surgeon may as well overlook the distinction between a scalpel and a forceps as a preacher overlook the distinction between doctrines every one of which is an instrument aptly and beautifully shaped for a special purpose; and, if the surgeon should use the saw when he ought to use the lance, he would operate less harmfully than the preacher who applies one doctrine when he ought to apply another. If God require us to use the hammer, we should not use the fire instead thereof; and, if he require us to administer the oil of consolation, we should not in lieu thereof administer the wormwood of reproof. It is the truth which the Spirit blesses, the truth as it is; not half the truth, not the whole truth with some additions, not maimed and distorted truth, not truth which is involved in doubt and may perhaps after all be proved a lie, but clear, plain, prominent truth. This it is which, because adapted in itself to convert men the Spirit makes effectual in converting them. This it is which, because it harmonizes with the commanding sentiments of our moral nature, is harmonized with by the Spirit in renovating that nature; for the Spirit is a God of harmony, and employs no instruments which are not congenial with the feelings of the operator and the nature of the agent

operated upon. It is this truth and only this, which the minister is commissioned to unfold. If he would unfold it, he must study it, for, save in an age of miracles, how knoweth any man letters, having never learned? If he do not study it, he may speak with eloquence indeed, but can never preach with sacred eloquence; for to speak is not to preach, and it is not mere eloquence but sacred eloquence, which is adapted to secure the great effect of preaching on the heart of man.

"Let the minister unfold the true doctrine of repentance, and declare that his unconverted hearers are bound to repent now, on the spot, and that they are able to do whatever they are bound to do, and let him unhesitatingly and earnestly, just as if he expected they would do it, urge them to make their election sure before they leave their seats, they will feel that, if able to repent, they are guilty more than unfortunate in not repenting; and if able and pressed to repent now, they will try, and their trial shows how strong is the resistance of their voluntary selfishness, which transforms the easy into the difficult; and this discovery of their obstinate sin will be at least a salutary conviction of guilt, and perhaps the first step in their progress from sin to holiness.

"On the contrary, let the preacher misunderstand the first principles of moral agency, and he will exhort his hearers to repent when they go home, or to use the means of repentance, or to form the fixed resolution of repenting at some future time; and they will feel that they are not invited to repent immediately, and will be glad to enjoy for a season the sin which they are not urged to leave, and to enjoy the quiet which they drink in from their purpose of avoiding hereafter the end which they are now approaching. They verify the remark of Luther, that 'the road to hell is paved with good resolves.' Sometimes the preacher, while he exhorts his hearers to future repentance, assures them that their duty even then will transcend their ability, and thus instead of profiting them with an incentive to obedience he only amazes them at the injustice of requiring bricks without straw.

"Or, perhaps, in the same discourse, and without such disqualification as the nature of the doctrine demands, he will perplex them with the farrago of figurative and literal statements that they are able and unable, have at the same time power and no power, to do as they should.

"But even when the confounding of moral certainty with natural inability does not lead to a seeming paradox, which impairs the persuasive influence of the preacher, it leads him either to omit exhortation altogether, and abandon his hearers to be converted as and when God's sovereignty shall choose, or else to utter a lifeless and jejune appeal, which has as much tendency to prostrate the walls of Jericho, or perform any other miracle on matter, as it has to effect a renovation of the heart. The appeal is 'as good as dead.' The worst than can be said of its rhetorical complexion is that it is in keeping with the theology from which it emanates. The best that can be said of any exhortation which springs from error is that it is useless. *Ex nihilo, nihili fit.* It is indeed a pleasant thought that if the preacher have a peculiar liveliness of temperament, or warmth of piety, he may shake off his speculations for an hour and preach as a man, though he will have it that he is a machine. In the main, however, his necessarian faith will trammel his eloquence, and he will feel as under an incubus when he invites men to accomplish impossibilities. The difficulty is, he has substituted for the scriptural doctrine of repentance a theory of his own; but this theory, as it will not bear inspection when in a cold thesis, is peculiarly awkward in a sermon; and, as it is a poor thing in the study, so it is exactly the thing which ought not to be in the pulpit. The man is possessed with the feeling that his hearers are more than morally disabled, and he cannot harangue before dry bones as he would before living beings; and so he utters cold words to a cold assembly, uses sepulchral tones to grave-stones of men; and dead, dead, is the whole obituary of himself and his people. His doctrine is ill-contrived for the innate susceptibilities of his hearers; and they, waiting for God's time, sleep on, till his time come, not indeed of regeneration, but of sentence.

"The doctrine of prayer may also be noticed, as adapted, when correctly preached, to produce the effect for which all doctrine was designed, but operating, when preached incorrectly, as a sharp sickle operates when applied as and where it

should not be. A prayer is a request offered with appropriate feeling. A request disconnected with love, and humility, and faith, is no more a prayer than the mimic representations of the stage are the living realities which are only represented. A theologian will exhort sinners to *pray*, not to *mock*, to pray immediately, and not defer the service until they are better fitted for it, to pray just as they are, to plough and reap, eat and drink, for the glory of God, and not for their selfish advantage. Unless they pray, they are in immediate and grievous peril; and, if they pretend to pray while they are impenitent, they add hypocrisy to their other sins, and, as if tired of modestly profaning the outer court, press forward, with a novel boldness, to profane the holy of holies. The truth makes them see on their right hand and their left the impassable mountains; it shows them the hosts of the avenger crowding on from the rear; it agitates them with the conviction that to escape sidewise from duty is to perish like sheep on the mountains, to stand still is to be cut down; straight forward is their only course, and if Jordan* is before them they must swim the flood; and it is when the sinner sees himself thus shut up to one right line, which he must pursue exactly or die, that he feels his guilty impotence, and sinks down in such despair of himself, and such a fitness to depend on the aid of another, that divine grace interposes at this precise critical point, and takes to himself the glory of the passage which the sinner should, and therefore could, long since have made. Thus honouring to God, abasing and yet stimulating to man, is the suasive influence of truth as applied by the Spirit.

"But, when a minister misunderstands this doctrine of prayer, he bewilders the impenitent by assuring them that they cannot repent, which, in the literal sense, they can do, and yet that they can please God by praying for repentance, which in the indulgence of their selfish spirit they cannot do,—that their prayers are abominations in the sight of God, and yet should be offered to him who says, 'My soul hateth them,'—that they have no right to sin, yet may commit the iniquity of bending the rebellious knee at the mercy-seat, and thus avert the penalty of their less sacrilegious sins committed in less solemn positions. They are told to do that for which, if they die as soon as they have done it, they will be condemned to eternal woe. They receive such advice as may encourage them to say at the judgment, 'We are punished for following in letter and in spirit the advice of our minister.' When they are exhorted to pray for their conversion, they are exhorted to pray for their *first* right feeling; and, when they pray for their *first* right feeling, the prayer must precede this feeling, and must of course be offered with a feeling which is not right; they pray wickedly, that their wickedness even in this very prayer may give place to the piety which they at the same time hate, and are virtually exhorted to remain in sin until they receive some gift from on high, though it may be that their spirits will be called up, following hard after their praying breath, to the God who abhorreth the smoke of strange offerings.

"To exhort sinners to pray as sinners, that they may be enabled to pray as Christians, is indeed common, and in its first impression is not so unseemly; yet this is, in its true implications to recommend their continuance in sin until that future period—a period which, under such treatment, is slow in coming—when a celestial influence shall render wicked prayers no longer necessary, and absolve from the anomalous requirement that a man carry his rebellion up to the altar before he can satisfy his God. It is at his peril that a preacher allow his necessarian philosophy to inculcate such procrastination of repentance even for an instant; he overlooks the impulses of man's moral nature, and, if he produce any impression on his hearers, it will be the mischievous one that their sin is a misfortune which omnipotence in pity must remove, that so long as they pray against their calamity, and perform so well the condition of repentance, they do all which can be expected of them, and must leave the results to him who will not withhold the piety which his compassion loves to bestow, and who has promised to hear even the young raven when it crieth. They lull themselves with the dream that

* The allusion seems to be rather to the Red Sea than to Jordan, and the notion of swimming the flood seems somewhat incongruous.

their prayer will be effectual with a prayer-hearing God, and that, though not Christians, yet they have ceased to be obstinate like other sinners, and are raised to a distinct class-seekers, and are performing an intermediate kind of obedience, just what it should be in its exterior, just what it should not be in every thing essential. The men who abide day after day in this amphibious attitude are certainly beyond the jurisdiction of the Bible, which was written when there were only two classes of men in existence—one who served God, another who served him not; they are engaged in a course of obedience which the Master knows nothing of, for he never recognizes neutrals, and has given no command which can be obeyed without full and instant love; they therefore elude the humbling influence of truth, which profits the penitent and impenitent, but passes by without touching the species of men who lie midway between something and nothing: and they often receive, as the positive recompense of their negative service, a blunt conscience, a self-complacent and self-confident heart, and an inveterate habit of waiting for God to do what he requires them to do. Thus prolific of mischief, and unsuited to the tendencies of the moral constitution, is the philosophy which describes repentance as something to be prayed for rather than something to be performed, and teaches man to comply with the conditions of his duty rather than do his duty. The truth of God is 'quick,' 'cease to do evil, learn to do well,' and not hypothetical and circumambulatory, 'Try to pray that you may be enabled to begin the right course.'

"No other luminary than that which God has made can enlighten the earth; no other doctrine than that which God has revealed can ameliorate the heart. It is, then, almost a truism to say, that he who would eloquently persuade men to godliness must make his eloquence a vivid presentation of the great motives to godliness, and, as these motives are all involved in divine truth, he may, without understanding that truth, write elegantly and speak gracefully, but what he writes will be no sermon, and his speaking will be a declamatory profanation of the pulpit, which is not the orator's, but the 'preacher's throne,' and should exhibit nothing but the life and life-giving spirit of evangelical doctrine.

"I remark, in the last place, that sacred eloquence depends essentially on theological study, because this study discloses the essential truths which glorify God. The preacher is commanded to declare all the doctrines of the gospel, to declare them variously, explicitly, thoroughly; and he who obeys this command honours not only the government but also the character of Jehovah. To represent the divine excellences so that they shall be apprehended, is the sacred eloquence of thought, so that they shall be loved, is the sacred eloquence of feeling; for, if the heathen's remark be true, that to know God is to glorify him, then to make him known is to glorify him more extensively; and, if to make him known be glorious to him, to make him loved is still more glorious. Whether an audience adore or despise the character of Jehovah, their very apprehension of the character will eventually honour it: and their contempt even will illustrate the boundlessness of his mercy or the purity of his justice. It is a thought which may always add solemnity to the preacher's emotion, and energy to his eloquence, that when he portrays the divine attributes his words, if they be understood, shall not one of them be lost, but shall for ever elicit new praise to him who maketh even sin the occasion of new and honourable developments. If this thought be impressive, there is another still more animating to the faithful preacher, that by his vivid delineations of the Divinity he may multiply copies of that infinite perfection, and by transfusing the divine image may call forth the glory which comes not barely from the knowledge, but also from the love and resemblance of God.

"But how can men love an object which they do not apprehend? How can souls be converted without a notion of the Being to whom they are converted? To make Christians is the easiest thing in the world. Constantine made them by thousands in the day. The popes have made whole nations true to the faith by a single decree. A single sermon may convert an audience without the aid of an interposing spirit, save perhaps the spirit of darkness. When Christians are multiplied at a protracted meeting, the great query is,—are they lovers of that excel-

ence which constitutes Christ? Are they converted to that holiness which is the moral sum of Jehovah? From what, to what, are they transformed? There is often the most lamentable ground for fear that they are changed from the worship of one form of sin to that of another. The Deity is not glorified by conversions, but by conversions to the truth. It is not the three letters, *God*, which make the object of adoration, but a pure spirit of excellence. The indefinite preacher speaks of a something who is nought but kindness and mercy, and he calls that something God, and then asks his hearers to love it, because it is so full of love to them. They love it, and are proclaimed as converts. But they have loved it in another form ever since they loved themselves. Every sinner loves it so long as he remains a sinner. They are converted only to a love of a new conformation of their own depravity. This something—it may be called God—remains the same in essence by whatever cognomen it may be designated, and is the likeness of nothing in the heaven above, but is the image of its makers on earth, selfish, partial, and sinful. Their love to it is love to an idol. Their prayers, and praises, and songs, and obedient service to it, are all to their own creature rather than their great Creator. The true spiritual divinity is the discernor of the thoughts, and sees that this homage is mistaken and misapplied, was meant for another being, who wears his name indeed, but none of his attributes, and who has only a fictitious existence. Oh there are many anthems, and solemn dedications, and devout observances, which go up from nominal worshippers, but go *by* God's throne, and wander about in search of their shadowy object, which exists anywhere rather than in the regions above. Even in the true church of Christ there is much idolatry. Intermingled with devotion to Jehovah, there is much devotion to an ethereal figment of our own fancies. Secular eloquence may persuade men to love the gold of God's throne, but he does not feel praised unless we love the holiness of it. A meagre system of theology will suffice for the preacher who inculcates the love of many things connected with religion, but God does not feel glorified unless we love religion itself. He has no corporeal ears to be pleased with the sound, 'God;,' but heareth with the Spirit, and acknowledges no name save his true character inwardly appreciated and loved. With wrong views of his character we cannot actively glorify him. The first duty, then, of the preacher is to publish this character, so that an assimilating influence may flow forth from it upon those who hear, to hold up this living and life-imparting mystery of perfection, so that it may reflect its own likeness upon the lookers on. The more conspicuously and properly a preacher delineates the divine character in a sermon, so much the more hope may be entertained that the Spirit will use that sermon as an instrument of good to souls and glory to God. This interposition of the Spirit is the only source of hope; this hope is the great spring of eloquence. It is needless to say that the preacher must understand the whole system of revealed truth if he would faithfully describe the divine perfections; for these perfections embrace the whole system. Sacred eloquence, then, which is the power of speaking so as to glorify God, is the power of speaking well on all the truths of God, and peculiarly on those attributes which in themselves make up his essential, and in their exhibition his declarative glory. As the sacred is the top-stone of all eloquence, so it ultimately rests on the broadest of all bases, a complete theological science.

"The rule that a preacher defer writing his discourse until he have a distinct apprehension of the topics which he means to introduce into that discourse is elementary. With this distinct apprehension he may not always write with clearness; for he may be so deficient in his power of language, his mind may move so quickly over premises which he glances at but does not mark for remembrance, to results which he seizes at strongly and holds too nakedly for plain communication to others, or he may have formed a habit of association elevated so far above all communion with the common intellect, that he is unable to utter intelligibly what he vividly conceives. But, if a writer cannot always express with clearness the ideas which he has, he can never so express the ideas which he has not; and he may nearly as well preach in a foreign language as in a style which does not emanate from his distinct conceptions. 'Those orators,' says one, 'who give us

much noise and many words, but little argument and less wit, and who are most loud when they are the least lucid, should take a lesson from the great volume of nature; she often gives us the lightning even without the thunder, but never the thunder without the lightning.'

"It is, however, by no means sufficient that a man investigate barely those parts of his subject which he wishes to discuss in his sermon. He must investigate all parts before he can safely decide which to discuss and which to exclude. He must be able to take the whole subject into his hands, as a ball of ivory, and turn it over and over, and present all sides of it. Even if he deem a particular branch to be inappropriate to the pulpit, still it must be analysed. The analysis will give impulse and acumen to his mind, suggest the most suitable and eloquent collocation of his more popular thoughts, and often initiate him into new fields of practical reflection. Every part of his doctrine has its collateral parts, its dependences, its intimations; and, if he explore the circumjacent ground as well as the spot on which he intends to build, he will often discover a fruitful spot in the very darkest corners, under the most tangled shrubbery. 'Even a Russian steppe has a tumuli and gold ornaments; also many a scene, that looks desert and rock-bound from the distance, will unfold itself, when visited, into rare valleys.' Our clergymen commit an injurious error when they neglect and repudiate all discussion which promises no immediate practical bearing. They should reflect that in a great building there are rough and unsightly foundation-stones, which are not to be wholly dispensed with, because they are unsuitable for a place in the parlour, on the sofa, or the piano. They should reflect that in a finished picture there are some colourings which will disgust if presented in bold relief, but will leave the picture yet more disgusting if excluded from the back-ground, where perhaps only a connoisseur will be able to explain their effect. A sermon is incomplete unless its arrangement, its allusions, its whole spirit betray the author's familiarity with the fundamental and even suppressed branches of his theme. A minister need not, in these days, be afraid of study. He cannot know too much of truth. He must remember that all sacred rhetoric is but a new arrangement of the materials of theology, and in proportion to the abundance of his materials may be the felicity of his selection. In vain will he labour to polish his discourses unless he have given them the firm, solid contexture which is derived from sacred science. Disintegrated sand-stone cannot be polished. In vain will he hope to elevate the minds of his hearers by fervent appeal unless he himself be borne aloft by his subject, his whole subject, and nothing but his subject—unless, I say, his subject raise him, and he be relieved from forcing his own progress upward, like a bird of prey, dragging his subject along after him. In vain will he decorate his style with tropes when his doctrine, like a poor stray child, is lost amid a forest of similes. A neat shroud is very neat, and a white fillet is very white; but a carcase is still a carcase notwithstanding the shroud, and the vacant face is still vacant, notwithstanding the fillet. In vain will he strive to impart a becoming energy to his sermons unless he have that enthusiasm which nothing but sacred study can inspire, an enthusiasm which is but another name for a fervent love of truth, and which is more essential for a preacher than even secular enthusiasm is for a secular orator. It is mild to say that a preacher, unskilled in the word of righteousness, will inflict upon his audience sermons ephemeral, unimpressive, emitting their first and only light when his administrators shall perform the duty, which he should have anticipated, of consigning them to the flames; the severe fact is that he will not only fail to teach the truth, but will teach error, error in the substance of his doctrine, error in the shading of it, error at least in the moral impressions of it; and whoever has computed the mischiefs of one error under sacerdotal sanction may estimate the influence of one man instructing by conjecture, warning at random, mutilating at hap-hazard the doctrines which an angel would not dare to touch save with a delicate hand, and after a wary, circumspect survey."

No. III.

ON EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

AFTER having said so much on the subject of composition, the choice of language, and the different methods of constructing sermons, it may be thought that I can have no occasion to refer to extemporaneous preaching except for the purpose of condemning it. Those who come to such a conclusion have not however entered into my views, nor appreciated my design, in the foregoing Lectures. Anxious as I am that the *student* should be thoroughly acquainted with the various sources of thought which may assist him in the exhibition of truth, that he should be familiar with the rules of composition and attain facility by practice, and that he should fully understand the mechanism (if I may be allowed the term) of the various kinds of discourse, I am by no means the less solicitous that the *preacher* should appear before his audience free from the constrained, formal, uninteresting mode of address which keeps him from immediate contact with the hearts of his fellow-sinners. This can be accomplished only by the habit of freely expressing his immediate thoughts and feelings, and I am persuaded that one cause of the inefficiency of preaching may be traced to the practice of reading sermons, or delivering them memoriter, which prevails at present to a great extent. I am aware of the difficulties which in the first instance attend the extemporaneous method, but I cannot believe that they are so formidable as is commonly supposed. Professor Ware, of Boston, America, in his pamphlet on extemporaneous preaching, presents the subject in a very clear and forcible light. I shall here transcribe the substance of his remarks, condensed and somewhat altered, which will better express my own views than any thing I could now write:—

“As regards merely the use of unpremeditated language, it is far from being a difficult attainment. A writer whose opportunities of observation give weight to his opinion says, in speaking of the style of the younger Pitt—‘This profuse and interminable flow of words is not in itself either a rare or remarkable endowment. It is wholly a thing of habit, and is exercised by every village lawyer with various degrees of power and grace.* If there be circumstances which render the habit more difficult to be acquired by the preacher, they are still such as may be surmounted; and it may be made plain, I think, that the advantages which he may thus ensure to himself are so many and so great as to offer the strongest inducement to make the attempt.

“That these advantages are real and substantial may be safely inferred from the habit of public orators in other professions, and from the effects which they are known to produce. There is more natural warmth in the declamation, more earnestness in the address, greater animation in the manner, more of the lighting up of the soul in the countenance and whole mien, more freedom and meaning in the gesture—the eye speaks, and the fingers speak, and, when the orator is so excited as to forget everything but the matter on which his mind and feelings are acting, the whole body is affected and helps to propagate his emotions to the hearer. Amidst all the exaggerated colouring of Patrick Henry’s biographer, there is doubtless enough that is true to prove a power in a spontaneous energy of an excited speaker, superior in its effects to any thing that can be produced by writing. Something of the same sort has been witnessed by every one who is in the habit of attending in the courts of justice or the chambers of legislation. And this, not only in the instances of the most highly eloquent; but inferior men are found thus to excite attention and produce effects which they never could have done by their pens. In deliberative assemblies, in senates and parliaments, the larger portion of the speaking is necessarily unpremeditated; perhaps the most eloquent is always so, for it is elicited by the growing heat of debate—it is the spontaneous combustion of the mind in the conflict of opinion. Chatham’s speeches were not written, nor those of Fox, nor that of Ames on the British treaty. They were, so

* Europe, &c., by a Citizen of the United States.

far as regards their language and ornaments, the effusions of the moment, and derived from their freshness a power which no study could impart. Among the orations of Cicero which are said to have made the greatest impression, and to have best accomplished the orator's design, are those delivered on unexpected emergencies which precluded the possibility of previous preparation. Such were his first invective against Cataline, and the speech which stilled the disturbances at the theatre. In all these cases, there can be no question of the advantage which the orators enjoyed in their ability to make use of the excitement of the occasion, unchilled by the formality of studied preparation. Although possibly guilty of many rhetorical and logical faults, yet these would be unobserved in the fervent and impassioned torrent which bore away the minds of the delighted auditors.

"It is doubtless very true that a man of study and reflection, accustomed deliberately to weigh every expression and analyse every sentence, and to be influenced by nothing which does not bear the test of the severest examination, may be most impressed by the quiet, unpretending reading of a well-digested essay or dissertation. To some men the concisest statement of a subject, with nothing to adorn the naked skeleton of thought, is most forcible. They are even impatient of any attempt to assist its effect by fine writing, by emphasis, tone, or gesture. They are like the mathematician who read the *Paradise Lost* without pleasure because he could not see that it proved any thing. But we are not to judge from the taste of such men of what is suitable to affect the majority. The multitude are not mere thinkers or great readers. From their necessary habits they are incapable of following a long discussion, except it be made inviting by the circumstances attending it or the manner of conducting it. Their attention must be roused and maintained by some external application. To them

'Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
More learned than their ears.'

"There is one mode of address for books and for classical readers, and another for the mass of men, who judge by the eye and ear, by the fancy and feelings, and know little of rules of art or of an educated taste. Hence it is that many of those preachers who have become the classics of a country have been unattractive to the multitude, who have deserted their polished and careful composition for the more unrestrained and rousing declamation of another class. In order to secure the attention of men they must be addressed according to their actual character, and in that mode in which their habits of mind may render them most accessible. As but few are thinkers or readers, a congregation is not to be addressed as such; but, their modes of life being remembered, constant regard must be had to their need of external attraction. This is most easily done by the familiarity and directness of extemporaneous address, for which reason this mode of preaching has peculiar advantages, in its adaptation to their situation and wants. It is not the weight of the thought, the profoundness of the argument, the exactness of the arrangement, nor the choiceness of the language, which interests and chains the attention of even those educated hearers who are able to appreciate them. They are as likely to sleep through the whole as others. And, as to the large mass of the people, they are to them hidden things, of which they discern nothing. It is not these, so much as the attraction of an earnest manner, which arrests the attention and makes instruction welcome. Every day's observation may show us that he who has this manner will retain the attention of even an intellectual man with common-place thoughts; while, with a different manner, he would render tedious the most novel and ingenious disquisitions. Let an indifferent reader take into the pulpit a sermon of Barrow or Butler, and all its excellence of argument and eloquence would not save it from being accounted tedious; while an empty declaimer shall collect crowds to hang upon his lips in raptures. And this manner, which is so attractive, is not the studied artificial enunciation of the rhetorician's school, but the free, flowing, animated utterance, which seems to come from the impulse of the subject, which may be full of faults, yet masters the attention by its nature and sincerity.

"Every man expresses himself with greater animation and truer emphasis in speaking than he does, or perhaps can do, in reading or reciting what he has learned.

Hence it happens that we can listen longer to a tolerable speaker than to a good reader. There is an indescribable something in the natural tones of him who is expressing earnestly his present thoughts altogether foreign from the drowsy uniformity of the man that reads. We have all witnessed this in conversation, when we have listened with interest to long harangues from persons who tire us at once if they begin to read. It is verified every day at the bar and in the legislature, where an orator will maintain the unflagging attention of hearers for a long period, when he could not have read the same speech without producing intolerable fatigue. It is equally verified in the history of the pulpit ; for those who are accustomed to the reading of sermons are for the most part impatient, even of able discourses, when they extend beyond the half hour's length ; while very indifferent extemporaneous preachers are listened to with unabated attention for a full hour. In the former case there is a certain uniformity of tone, and a perpetual recurrence of the same cadences, inseparable from the manner of a reader, from which the speaker remains longer free. This difference is perfectly well understood, and was acted upon by Cecil, whose success as a preacher gives him a right to be heard, when he advises young preachers to 'limit a written sermon to half an hour and one from notes to forty minutes.' For the same reason, those preachers whose reading comes nearest to speaking are universally more interesting than others.

"Thus it is evident that there is an attractiveness in this mode of preaching which gives it peculiar advantages. He imparts greater interest to what he says who is governed by the impulse of the moment than he who speaks by rule. When he feels the subject his voice and gesture correspond to that feeling, and communicate it to others as it can be done in no other way. Though he possess but indifferent talents, yet, if he utter himself with sincerity and feeling, it is far pleasanter than to listen to his cold reading of what he wrote perhaps with little excitement and delivers with less.

"It is no unimportant consideration to a minister of the gospel that a talent for extemporaneous speaking is held in high estimation among men and gives additional influence to him who possesses it. Fluency of language passes with many, and those not always the vulgar, for affluence of thought ; and never to be at a loss for something to say is supposed to indicate inexhaustible knowledge. It cannot have escaped the observation of any one accustomed to notice the judgments which are passed upon men how much reputation and consequent influence are acquired by the power of speaking readily and boldly, without any other considerable talent and with very indifferent acquisitions ; and how a man of real talents, learning, and worth, has frequently sunk below his proper level from a mere awkwardness and embarrassment in speaking without preparation. So that it is not simply superstition which leads so many to refuse the name of preaching to all but extemporaneous harangues ; it is in part owing to the natural propensity there is to admire, as something wonderful and extraordinary, this facility of speech. It is undoubtedly a very erroneous standard of judgment. But a minister of the gospel, whose success in his important calling depends so much on his personal influence and the estimation in which his gifts are held, can hardly be justified in slighting the cultivation of a talent which may so innocently add to his means of influence.

"Occasions will also sometimes occur when the want of this power may expose him to mortification and deprive him of an opportunity of usefulness. For such emergencies one would choose to be prepared. It may be of consequence that he should express his opinion on matters connected with our religious institutions, or the affairs of the denomination to which he may belong, and give reasons for the adoption or rejection of important measures. Possibly he may be only required to state facts which have come to his knowledge. It is very desirable to be able to do this readily, fluently, without embarrassment to himself, and pleasantly to those who hear ; and, in order to this, a habit of speaking is necessary. In the course of his ministrations amongst his own people occasions will arise when an exhortation or address would be seasonable and useful, but when there is no time for written preparation. If then he have cultivated the art of extemporaneous speaking, and attained to any degree of facility and con-

fidence in it, he may avail himself of the opportunity to do good which he must otherwise pass by unimproved. A sudden providence on the very day of the Sabbath may suggest most valuable topics of reflection and exhortation, lost to him who is confined to what he may have previously written, but choice treasure to him who can venture to speak without writing. If it were only to avail himself of a few opportunities like these in the course of his life, or to save himself but once the mortification of being silent when he ought to speak, is expected to speak, and would do good by speaking, it would be well worth all the time and pains it might cost to acquire it.

"It is a further advantage, not to be forgotten here, that the excitement of speaking in public strikes out new views of a subject, new illustrations, and new arguments, which perhaps never would have presented themselves to the mind in retirement. 'The warmth which animates him,' says Fenelon, 'gives birth to expressions and figures which he never could have prepared in his study.' He who feels himself safe in flying off from the path he has prescribed to himself, without any fear lest he should fail to find his way back, will readily seize upon these, and be astonished at the new light which breaks in upon him as he goes on, and flashes all around him. This is according to the experience of all extemporaneous speakers. 'The degree in which,' says Thomas Scott, who practised this method constantly, 'after the most careful preparation for the pulpit, new thoughts, new arguments, animated addresses, often flow into my mind, while speaking to a congregation, even on very common subjects, makes me feel as if I were quite another man than when poring over them in my study. There will be inaccuracies; but generally the most striking things in my sermons were unpremeditated.'

"Then, again, the presence of the audience gives a greater seeming reality to the work; it is less like doing a task, and more like speaking to men, than when one sits coolly writing at his table. Consequently there is likely to be greater plainness and directness in his exhortations—more closeness in his appeals—more of the earnestness of genuine feeling in his expostulations. He ventures, in the warmth of the moment, to urge considerations which perhaps in the study seemed too familiar, and to employ modes of address which are allowable in personal communion with a friend, but which one hesitates to commit to writing, lest he should infringe the dignity of deliberate composition. This forgetfulness of self, this unconstrained following the impulse of the affections, while he is hurried on by the presence and attention of those whom he hopes to benefit, creates a sympathy between him and his hearers—a direct passage from heart to heart—a mutual understanding of each other, which does more to effect the true object of religious discourse than any thing else can do. The preacher will, in this way, have the boldness to say many things which ought to be said, but about which, in his study, he would feel reluctant and timid. And, granting that he might be led to say some things improperly, yet if his mind be well disciplined and well governed, and his discretion habitual, he will do it exceedingly seldom; while no one who estimates the object of preaching as highly as he should will think an occasional false step any objection against that mode which insures upon the whole the greatest boldness and earnestness. He will think it a less fault than the tameness and abstractedness which are the besetting sins of deliberate composition.

"Another consideration which recommends this method to the attention of preachers, though at the same time it indicates one of its difficulties, is this, that all men, from various causes, constitutional or accidental, are subject to great inequality in the operations of their minds—sometimes labouring with felicity and sometimes failing. Perhaps this fact is in no men so observable as in preachers, because no others are so much compelled to labour, and to exhibit their labours, at all seasons, favourable and unfavourable. There is a certain quantity of the severest mental toil to be performed every week: and, as the mind cannot be always in the same frame, they are constantly presenting proofs of the variation of their powers. An extemporaneous speaker is of course exposed to all this inequality, and must expect to be sometimes mortified by ill success. When

the moment of speaking arrives his mind may be slow and dull, his thoughts sluggish and impeded : he may be exhausted by labour, or suffering from temporary indispotion. He strives in vain to rally his powers, and forces his way, with thorough discomfort and chagrin, to the end of an unprofitable talk. But then how many men *write* under the same embarrassments, and are equally dissatisfied, with the additional mortification of having spent a longer time, and of being unable to give their poor preparation the interest of a forcible manner, which the very distress of an extemporaneous effort would have imparted !

"But, on the other hand, when the mind is bright and clear, and the animal spirits are lively, a man will speak much better after a suitable premeditation than he can possibly write. 'Every man,' says Bishop Burnet, 'may thus rise far above what he could ever have attained in any other way.' We see proof of this in conversation. When engaged in unrestrained and animated conversation with familiar friends, who is not conscious of having struck out brighter thoughts and happier sayings than he ever put upon paper in the deliberate composition of the closet ? It is a common remark concerning many men that they pray much better than they preach. The reason is that their sermons are made leisurely and sluggishly, without excitement ; but in their public devotions they are strongly engaged, and the mind acts with more concentration and vivacity.

"It is upon no different principle that we explain what all scholars have experienced, that they write best when they write rapidly, from a full and excited mind. One of Roscommon's precepts is—'To write with fury and correct with phlegm.' The author of *Waverley* tells us, 'that the works and passages in which he has succeeded, have uniformly been written with the greatest rapidity.' Johnson's best *Ramblers*, and his admirable *Rasselas*, were hurried, wet and uncorrected, to the press. The celebrated Rockingham Memorial, at the commencement of the late war, is said to have been the hasty composition of a single evening. And it will be found true, I believe, of many of the best sermon writers, that they revolve the subject until their minds are filled and warmed, and then put their discourse upon paper at a single sitting. Now what is all this but *extemporaneous writing* ? and what does it require but a mind equally collected and at ease, equally disciplined by practice and interested in the subject, to ensure equal success in *extemporaneous speaking* ? Nay, we might anticipate occasional superior success, since the thoughts sometimes flow, when at the highest and most passionate excitement, too rapidly and profusely for any thing slower than the tongue to afford them vent.

"There is one more consideration in favour of the practice I recommend, which I think cannot fail to have weight with all who are solicitous to make progress in theological knowledge,—namely, that it redeems time for study. The labour of preparing and committing to paper a sermon or two every week is one which necessarily occupies the principal part of a minister's time and thoughts, and withdraws him from the investigation of many subjects which, if his mind were more at leisure, it would be his duty and pleasure to pursue. He who *writes* sermons is ready to consider this as the chief object, or perhaps, the sole business of his calling. When not actually engaged in writing, yet the necessity of doing it presses upon his mind, and so binds him as to make him feel as if he were wrong in being employed on any thing else. But if he have acquired that ready command of thought and language which will enable him to speak without written preparation, the time and toil of writing are saved, to be devoted to a different mode of study. He may prepare his discourses at intervals of leisure, while walking or riding ; and having once arranged the outlines of the subject, and ascertained its principal bearings and applications, the work of preparation is over. The language remains to be suggested at the moment. Preparation for the pulpit doubtless demands, and should receive, the best of a man's talents and labours, but a habit of mind may be acquired which will enable him to make a better and more thorough preparation at less expense of labour and time than that of writing his discourses. He may acquire, by discipline, that ease and promptitude of looking into subjects, and bringing out their prominent features, which shall enable him at a glance, as it

were, to seize the points on which he should enlarge. Some minds are so constituted as 'to look a subject into shape' much more readily than others. But the power of doing it is in a great measure mechanical and depends upon habit. All may acquire it to a certain extent. When the mind works with most concentration, it works at once most quickly and most surely. Now the act of speaking extempore favours this concentration of the powers more than the slower process of leisurely writing, perhaps more than any other operation; consequently it increases, with practice, the facility of dissecting subjects and of arranging materials for preaching. In other words, the completeness with which a subject is viewed and its parts are arranged does not depend so much on the time spent upon it as on the vigour with which the attention is applied to it. That course of study is the best which most favours this vigour of attention; and the habit of extemporaneous speaking is, more than any thing, favourable to it, from the necessity which it imposes of applying the mind with energy and thinking promptly.

"The great danger in this case would be that of substituting an easy flow of words for good sense and sober reflection, and becoming satisfied with very superficial thoughts. But this danger is guarded against by the habit of study and of writing for other purposes. If a man should neglect all mental exertion except so far as would be required in the meditation of a sermon, it would be ruinous. We witness its disastrous effects in the empty wordiness of many extemporaneous preachers. It is wrong, however, to argue against the practice itself from their example; for all other modes would be equally condemned if judged by the ill-success of indolent and unfaithful men. The minister must keep himself occupied in reading, thinking, investigating—thus having his mind always awake and active. This is a far better preparation than the bare writing of sermons, for it exercises the powers more and keeps them bright. The great master of Roman eloquence thought it essential to the true orator that he should be familiar with all sciences and have his mind filled with every variety of knowledge. He therefore, much as he studied his favourite art, occupied more time in literature, philosophy, and politics, than in the composition of his speeches. His preparation was less particular than general. The same sort of preparation would ensure success in the pulpit. He who is always thinking may expend upon each individual effort less time because he can think at once fast and well. But he who never thinks, except when attempting to manufacture a sermon (and it is to be feared there are such men), must devote a great deal of time to this labour exclusively; and, after all, he will not have that wide range of thought or copiousness of illustration which his office demands and which study only can give.

"In fact, what I have here insisted upon is exemplified in the case of the extemporaneous *writers* whom I have already named. I would only carry their practice a step further, and devote an hour to a discourse instead of a day. Not to all discourses, for some ought to be written for the sake of writing, and some demand a sort of investigation to which the use of the pen is essential. But then a very large proportion of the topics on which a minister should preach have been subjects of his attention a thousand times. He is thoroughly familiar with them; and an hour to arrange his ideas and collect illustrations is abundantly sufficient. The late Thomas Scott is said for years to have prepared his discourses entirely by meditation on a Sunday, and thus to have gained leisure for his extensive studies and great and various labours. This is an extreme on which few have a right to venture, and which should be recommended to none. It shows, however, the power of habit, and the ability of a mind to act promptly and effectually which is kept upon the alert by constant occupation. He who is always engaged in thinking and studying will always have thoughts enough for a sermon, and good ones too, which will come at an hour's warning.

"Against what has been advanced in the preceding pages many objections will be urged, and the evils of the practice I recommend will be declared more than sufficient to counterbalance its advantages. Of these it is necessary that I should now take notice, and obviate them as well as I may.

"It should be first of all remarked that the force of the objections commonly made

lies against the *exclusive* use of extempore preaching, and not against its partial and general use. It is of consequence that this should be considered. There can be no doubt that he would preach very wretchedly who should always be haranguing without the corrective discipline of writing. The habit of writing is essential. Many of the objections which are currently made to this mode of address fall to the ground when this statement is made.

"Other objections have been founded on the idea that by *extemporaneous* is meant *unpremeditated*. Whereas there is a plain and important distinction between them. The latter word being applied to the thoughts and the former to the language only. To preach without premeditation is altogether unjustifiable; although there is no doubt that a man of habitual readiness of mind may express himself to great advantage on a subject with which he is familiar, after very little meditation.

"Many writers on the art of preaching, as well as on eloquence in general, have given a decided judgment unfavourable to extemporaneous speaking. There can be no fairer way of answering their objections than by examining what they have advanced, and opposing their authority by that of equal names on the other side.

"The objection most urged is one which relates to *style*. It is said, the expression will be poor, inelegant, inaccurate, and offensive to hearers of taste.

"To those who urge this it may be replied that the reason why style is an important consideration in the pulpit is not that the taste of the hearers may be gratified, for but a small part of any congregation is capable of taking cognizance of this matter; but solely for the purpose of presenting the speaker's thoughts, reasonings, and expostulations, distinctly and forcibly to the minds of his hearers. If this be effected, it is all that can reasonably be demanded. And I ask if it be not notorious that an earnest and appropriate elocution will give this effect to a poor style, and that poor speaking will take it away from the most exact and emphatic style? Is it not also notorious that the peculiar earnestness of spontaneous speech is, above all others, suited to arrest the attention and engage the feelings of an audience? and that the mere reading of a piece of fine composition, under the notion that careful thought and finished diction are the only things needful, leaves the majority uninterested in the discourse and free to think of any thing they please? 'It is a poor compliment,' says Blair, 'that one is an accurate reasoner, if he be not a persuasive speaker also.' It is a small matter that the style is poor, so long as it answers the great purpose of instructing and affecting men.

"Besides, if it were not so, the objection will be found quite as strong against the *writing* of sermons. For how large a proportion of sermon writers have these same faults of style! What a great want of force, neatness, compactness, is there in the composition of most preachers! What weakness, inelegance, and inconclusiveness! and how small improvement do they make, even after the practice of years! How happens this? It is because they do not make this an object of attention and study; and some might be unable to attain it if they did. But that watchfulness and care which will secure a correct and neat style in writing would also secure it in speaking. It does not naturally belong to the one more than to the other, and may be as certainly attained in each by the proper pains. Indeed, so far as my observation has extended, I am not certain that there is not as large a proportion of extempore speakers whose diction is exact and unexceptionable as of writers, always taking into view their education, which equally affects the one and the other. And it is a consideration of great weight that the faults in question are far less offensive in speakers than in writers.

"A want of order, a rambling, unconnected, desultory manner, is commonly objected. Hume styles it, 'extreme carelessness of method;' and this is so often observed as to be justly an object of dread. But this is occasioned by that indolence and want of discipline to which we have just alluded. It is not a necessary evil. If a man have never studied the art of speaking, nor passed through a course of preparatory discipline—if he have so rash and unjustifiable a confidence in himself that he will undertake to speak without having considered what he shall

say, what object he shall aim at, or by what steps he shall attain it—the inevitable consequence will be confusion, inconclusiveness, and wandering. Who recommends such a course? But he who has first trained himself to the work, and whenever he would speak has surveyed his ground and become familiar with the points to be dwelt upon, and the course of reasoning and track of thought to be followed, will go on from one step to another in an easy and natural order, and give no occasion to the complaint of confusion or disarrangement.

“Some preachers,” says Dinouart, ‘have the folly to think that they can make sermons impromptu. And what a piece of work they make! They bolt out everything which comes into their head. They take for granted what ought to be proved, or perhaps they state half the argument and forget the rest. Their appearance corresponds to the state of their mind, which is occupied in hunting after some way of finishing the sentence they have begun. They repeat themselves; they wander off in digression. They stand stiff without moving; or, if they are of a lively temperament, they are full of the most turbulent action; their eyes and hands are flying about in every direction, and their words choke in their throats. They are like men swimming who have got frightened, and throw about their hands and feet at random to save themselves from drowning.’

“There is doubtless great truth in this humorous description. But what is the legitimate inference? that extemporaneous speaking is altogether ridiculous and mischievous? or only that it is an art which requires study and discipline, and which no man should presume to practise until he has fitted himself for it?

“In the same way I should dispose of the objection that this habit leads to barrenness in preaching, and the everlasting repetition of the same sentiments and topics. If a man makes his facility of speech an excuse for the neglect of study, then doubtless this will be the result. He who cannot resist his indolent propensities had best avoid this occasion of temptation. He must be able to command himself to think, and industriously prepare himself by meditation, if he would be safe in this hazardous experiment. He who does this, and continues to learn and reflect while he preaches, will be no more empty and monotonous than if he carefully wrote every word.

“But this temptation to indolence in the preparation for the desk is urged as in itself a decisive objection. A man finds that, after a little practice, it is an exceedingly easy thing to fill up his half-hour with declamation which shall pass off very well, and hence he grows negligent in previous meditation, and insensibly degenerates into an empty exhorter, without choice of language or variety of ideas. This is undoubtedly the great and alarming danger of this practice. This must be triumphed over, or it is ruinous. We see examples of it wherever we look among those whose preaching is exclusively extempore. In these cases, the evil rises to its magnitude in consequence of their total neglect of the pen. The habit of writing a certain proportion of the time would, however, counteract this dangerous tendency.

“But it is still insisted that man’s natural love of ease is not to be trusted, that he will not long continue the drudgery of writing in part, that when he has once gained confidence to speak without study, he will find it so flattering to his indolence that he will involuntarily give himself up to it and relinquish the pen altogether, and that consequently there is no security except in never beginning.

“To this it may be replied that those who have not principle and self-government enough to keep them industrious will not be kept so by being compelled to write sermons. I think we have abundant proof that a man may write with as little pains and thinking as he can speak. It by no means follows that because it is on paper it is therefore the result of study. And, if it be not, it will be greatly inferior in point of effect to an unpremeditated declamation; for, in the latter case, there will probably be at least a temporary excitement of feeling, and consequent vivacity of manner, while in the former the indolence of the writer will be made doubly intolerable by his heaviness in reading.

“Many suppose that there is a certain natural talent essential to success in extempore speaking, no less than in poetry, and that it is absurd to recommend the

art to those who have not this peculiar talent, and vain for them to attempt its practice.

"In regard to that ready flow of words which seems to be the natural gift of some men, it is of little consequence whether it be really such or be owing to the education and habits of early life and vain self-confidence. It is certain that diffidence and the want of habit are great hindrances to fluency of speech; and it is equally certain that this natural fluency is a very questionable advantage to him who would be an impressive speaker. Those who at first talk easiest do not always talk best. Their very facility is a snare to them: it serves to keep them content; they make no effort to improve, and are likely to fall into slovenly habits of elocution. So that this unacquired fluency is so far from essential that it is not even a benefit, and it may be an injury. It keeps from final eminence by the very greatness of its early promise. On the other hand, he who possesses originally no remarkable command of language, and whom an unfortunate bashfulness prevents from well using what he has, is obliged to subject himself to severe discipline—to submit to rules and tasks—to go through a tedious process of training—to acquire by much labour the needful sway over his thoughts and words, so that they shall come at his bidding, and not be driven away by his own diffidence or the presence of other men. To do all this is a long and disheartening labour. He is exposed to frequent mortifications, and must endure many grievous failures before he attain that confidence which is indispensable to success. But then in this discipline his powers, mental and moral, are strained up to the highest intenseness of action; after persevering practice they become habitually subject to his control, and work with a precision, exactness, and energy, which can never be the possession of him who has depended on his native undisciplined gift. It was probably this to which Newton referred when he said that he never spoke well till he felt that he could not speak at all. Let no one therefore think it an obstacle in his way that he has no readiness of words. If he have good sense and no deficiency of talent, and is willing to labour for this as all great acquisitions must be laboured for, he needs not fear but that in time he will attain it. Any man with powers which fit him for the ministry at all—unless there be a few extraordinary exceptions—is capable of learning to express himself clearly, correctly, and with method; and this is expressly what is wanted, and no more than this. I do not say eloquently; for, as it is not thought indispensable that every writer of sermons should be eloquent, it cannot be thought essential that every speaker should be so. But the same powers which have enabled him to write well, with sufficient discipline, enable him to speak, with every probability that when he comes to speak with the same ease and collectedness he will do it with a nearer approach to eloquence. Without such discipline he has no right to hope for success; let him not say that success is impossible until he has submitted to it. Let this art be made an object of attention, and if any of competent talents and tolerable science be found at last incapable of expressing themselves in continued and connected discourse, so as to answer the ends of the Christian ministry, then, and not till then, let it be said that a peculiar talent or natural aptitude is requisite, the want of which must render effort vain—then, and not till then, let us acquiesce in this indolent and timorous notion, which contradicts the whole testimony of antiquity and all the experience of the world. Doubtless, after the most that can be done, there will be found the greatest variety of attainment; 'men will differ,' as Burnet remarks, 'quite as much as in their written compositions,' and some will do but poorly what others will do excellently. But this is likewise true of every other art in which men engage, and not least so of writing sermons, concerning which no one will say that as poor are not written as it would be possible for any one to speak. In truth, men of small talents and great sluggishness, of a feeble sense of duty and no zeal, will of course make poor sermons, by whatever process they may do it, let them write or let them speak. It is doubtful concerning some whether they would even *steal* good ones.

"Success in every art, whatever may be the natural talent, is always the reward of industry and pains. But the instances are many of men of the finest natural

genius, whose beginning has promised much, but who have degenerated wretchedly as they advanced, because they trusted to their gifts and made *no effort* to improve. That there have never been other men of equal endowments with Demosthenes and Cicero none would venture to suppose; but who have so devoted themselves to their art or become equal in excellence? If those great men had been content, like others, to continue as they began, and had never made their persevering efforts for improvement, what would their countries have benefited from their genius or the world have known of their fame? They would have been lost in the undistinguished crowd that sunk to oblivion around them. Of how many more will the same remark prove true? What encouragement is thus given to the industrious! With such encouragement, how inexcusable is the negligence which suffers the most interesting and important truths to seem heavy and dull, and fall ineffectual to the ground, through mere sluggishness in their delivery! How unworthy of one who performs the high function of a religious instructor,—upon whom depend, in a great measure, the religious knowledge, devotional sentiment and final character of many fellow-beings,—to imagine that he can worthily discharge this great concern by occasionally talking for an hour, he knows not how, and in a manner which he has taken no pains to render correct, impressive, or attractive, and which, simply through want of that command over himself which study would give, is immethodical, verbose, inaccurate, feeble, trifling! It has been said of the good preacher that ‘truths divine come mended from his tongue.’ Alas! they come ruined and worthless from such a man as this. They lose that whole energy by which they are to convert the soul and purify man for heaven, and sink in interest and efficacy below the level of those principles which govern the ordinary affairs of this lower world.

“We have seen the advantages attending extemporaneous preaching, and the possibility of acquiring the art; let us now attend to some hints respecting the mode in which the study of it is to be carried on and obstacles are to be surmounted.

“The first thing to be observed is that the student who would acquire facility in this art should bear it constantly in mind, and have regard to it in all his studies and in his whole mode of study. The reason is very obvious. He that would become eminent in any pursuit must make it the primary and almost exclusive object of his attention. It must never be long absent from his thoughts, and he must be contriving how to promote it in every thing he undertakes. It is thus that the miser accumulates, by making the most trifling occurrences the occasions of gain; and thus the ambitious man is on the alert to forward his purposes of advancement by little events which another would pass unobserved. He who proposes to himself the art of extemporaneous speaking should in like manner have constant regard to this particular object and make every thing co-operate to form those habits of mind which are essential to it. This may be done, not only without any hindrance to the progress of his other studies, but even so as to promote them. The most important requisites are rapid thinking and ready command of language. By rapid thinking I mean the power of seizing at once upon the most prominent points of the subject to be discussed, and tracing out, in their proper order, the subordinate thoughts which connect them together. This power depends very much upon habit, a habit more easily acquired by some minds than by others, and by some with great difficulty; but there are few who should they have a view to the formation of such a habit in all their studies, might not attain it in a degree quite adequate to their purpose. This is much more indisputably true in regard to fluency of language. Let it, therefore, be a part of his daily care to analyse the subjects which come before him, and to frame sketches of sermons. This will aid him to acquire a facility in laying open, dividing, and arranging topics, and preparing those outlines which he is to take with him into the pulpit. Let him also investigate carefully the method of every author he reads, marking the divisions of his arrangement and the connexion and train of his reasoning. Butler’s preface to his Sermons will afford him some fine hints on this way of study. Let this be his habitual mode of reading, so that he

shall as much do this as receive the meaning of separate sentences, and shall be always able to give a better account of the progress of the argument and the relation of every part to the others and to the whole, than of merely individual passages and separate illustrations. This will infallibly beget a readiness in finding the divisions and boundaries of a subject, which is one important requisite to an easy and successful speaker. In a similar manner, let him always bear in mind the value of a fluent and correct use of language. Let him not be negligent of this in his conversation ; but be careful ever to select the best words, to avoid a slovenly style and drawling utterance, and to aim at neatness, force, and brevity. This may be done without formality, or stiffness, or pedantic affectation ; and when settled into a habit is invaluable.

"In addition to this general cultivation, there should be frequent exercise of the act of speaking. Practice is essential to perfection in any art, and in none more so than in this. No man reads well or writes well except by long practice ; and he cannot expect without it to speak well, an operation which is equivalent to the other two united. It would not be too much to require of the student that he should exercise himself every day once at least, if not oftener ; and this on a variety of subjects, and in various ways, that he may attain a facility in every mode. It would be a pleasant interchange of employment to rise from the subject which occupies his thoughts, or from the book which he is reading, and repeat to himself the substance of what he has just perused, with such additions and variations, or criticisms, as may suggest themselves at the moment. There could hardly be a more useful exercise, even if there were no reference to this particular end. How many excellent chapters of valuable authors, how many fine views of important subjects, would be thus impressed upon his mind, and what rich treasures of thought and language would be thus laid up in store ! And according as he should be engaged in a work of reasoning, or description, or exhortation, or narrative, he would be attaining the power of expressing himself readily in each of these various styles. 'By pursuing this course for two or three years,' a man may render himself such a master in this matter,' says Burnet, 'that he can never be surprised ;' he adds, that he never knew a man faithfully to pursue the plan of study he proposed without being successful at last.

"When by such a course of study and discipline he has attained a tolerable fluency of thoughts and words, and a moderate confidence in his own powers, there are several things to be observed in first exercising the gift in public, in order to ensure comfort and success.

"It is recommended by Bishop Burnet and others that the first attempts be made by short excursions from written discourses, like the young bird that tries its wings by short flights, till it gradually acquires strength and courage to sustain itself longer in the air. This advice is undoubtedly judicious. For one may safely trust himself in a few sentences who would be confounded in the attempt to frame a whole discourse. For this purpose blanks may be left in writing, where the sentiment is familiar, or only a short illustration is to be introduced. As success in these smaller attempts gives him confidence, he may proceed to larger ; till at length, when his mind is bright and his feelings are engaged, he may quit his manuscript altogether, and present *the substance of what he has written* with greater fervour and effect than if he had confined himself to his paper. It was once observed to me by an interesting preacher of the Baptist denomination that he had from experience found this to be the most advisable and perfect mode, since it combined the advantages of written and extemporaneous composition. By preparing sermons in this way, he said, he had a shelter and security if his mind should be dull at the time of delivery ; and, if it were active, he was able to leave what he had written, and obey the ardour of his feelings, and go forth on the impulse of the moment, wherever his spirit might lead him. A similar remark I heard made by a distinguished scholar of the Methodist connexion, who urged, what is universally assented to by those who have tried this matter with any success, that what has been written is found to be tame and spiritless in comparison with the animated glow of that which springs from the energy of the moment.

"There are some persons, however, who would be embarrassed by an effort to change the operation of the mind from reading to inventing. Such persons may find it best to make their beginning with a whole discourse. In this case there will be a great advantage in selecting for first efforts expository subjects. To say nothing of the importance and utility of this mode of preaching, which render it desirable that every minister should devote a considerable proportion of his labours to it, it contains great facilities and reliefs for the inexperienced speaker. The close study of a passage of scripture—which is necessary to expounding it—renders it familiar. The exposition is inseparably connected with the text, and necessarily suggested by it. The inferences and practical reflections are in like manner naturally and indissolubly associated with the passage. The train of remark is easily preserved, and embarrassment in a great measure guarded against, by the circumstance that the order of discourse is spread out in the open Bible, upon which the eyes may rest, and by which the thoughts may rally.

"A similar advantage is gained to the beginner, in discourses of a different character, by a very careful and minute division of the subject. The division should not only be logical and clear, but into parts as numerous as possible. The great advantage here is that, the partitions being many, the speaker is compelled frequently to return to his minutes. He is thus kept in the track, and prevented from wandering far in needless digressions—that besetting infirmity of unrestrained extemporizers. He also escapes the mortifying consequences of a momentary confusion and cloudiness of mind, by having it in his power to leave an unsatisfactory train at once, before the state of his mind is perceived by the audience, and take up the next topic, where he may recover his self-possession, and proceed without impediment. This is no unimportant consideration. It relieves him from the horror of feeling obliged to go on while conscious that he is saying nothing to the purpose, and at the same time secures the very essential requisite of right method.

"The next rule is that the whole subject, with the order and connexion of all its parts and the entire train of thought, be made thoroughly familiar by previous meditation. The speaker must have the discourse in his mind as one whole, whose various parts are distinctly perceived as other wholes, connected with each other and contributing to a common end. There must be no uncertainty, when he rises to speak, as to what he is going to say, no mist or darkness over the land he is about to travel; but, conscious of his acquaintance with the ground, he must step forward confidently, not doubting that he shall find the passes of its mountains, and thread the intricacies of its forests, by the paths which he has already trodden. It is an imperfect and partial preparation in this respect which so often renders the manner awkward and embarrassed, and the discourse obscure and perplexed. '*Nemo potest de eâ re, quam non novit, non terpiissime dicere.*' But, when the preparation is faithful, the speaker feels at home; being under no anxiety respecting the ideas or the order of their succession, he has the more ready control of his person, his eye, and his hand, and the more fearlessly gives up his mind to its own action and casts himself upon the current. Uneasiness and constraint are the inevitable attendants of unfaithful preparation, and they are fatal to success.

"It is true that no man can attain the power of self-possession, so as to feel at all times equally and entirely at ease. But he may guard against the sorest ills which attend its loss, by always making sure of a train of thought,—being secure that he has ideas, and that they lie in such order as to be found and brought forward in some sort of apparel, even when he has in some measure lost the mastery of himself. The richness or meanness of their dress will depend on the humour of the moment. It will vary as much as health and spirits vary, which is more in some men than in others. But the thoughts themselves he may produce, and be certain of saying what he intended, even when he cannot say it as he intended.

"Utter yourself very slowly and deliberately, with careful pauses. This is at all times a great aid to a clear and perspicuous statement. It is essential to the speaker who would keep the command of himself, and consequently of his hearers. One is very likely, when in the course of speaking he has stumbled on an unfortunate expression, or said what he would prefer not to say, or for a moment lost

sight of the precise point at which he was aiming, to hurry on with increasing rapidity, as if to get as far as possible from his misfortune, or cause it to be forgotten in the crowd of new words. But, instead of thus escaping the evil, he increases it; he entangles himself more and more, and augments the difficulty of recovering his route. The true mode of recovering himself is by increased deliberation. He must pause, and give himself time to think;—‘*ut tamen deliberare non hæsitare videatur.*’ He need not be alarmed lest his hearers should suspect the difficulty. Most of them are likely to attribute the slowness of his step to any cause rather than the true one. They take it for granted that he says and does precisely as he intended and wished. The change of manner excites their attention and is a relief to them. And the probability is, not only that the speaker recovers himself, but that the effort to do it gives a spring to the action of his powers which enables him to proceed afterwards with greater energy.

“In regard to language, the best rule is that no preparation be made. There is no convenient and profitable medium between speaking from memory and from immediate suggestion. To mix the two is no aid, but a great hindrance, because it perplexes the mind between the very different operations of memory and invention. To prepare sentences, and parts of sentences, which are to be introduced here and there, and the intervals between them to be filled up in the delivery, is the surest of all ways to produce constraint. It is like the embarrassment of framing verses to prescribed rhymes, as vexations and as absurd. To be compelled to shape the course of remark so as to suit a sentence which is by and by to come, or to introduce certain expressions which are waiting for their place, is a check to the natural current of thought. The inevitable consequence is constraint and labour, the loss of every thing like easy and flowing utterance, and perhaps that worst of confusion which results from a jumble of ill-assorted, disjointed periods. It is unavoidable that the subject should present itself in a little different form and complexion in speaking from that which it took in meditation, so that the sentences and modes of expression which agreed very well with the train of remark as it came up in the study may be wholly unsuited to that which it assumes in the delivery. The extemporaneous speaker should therefore trust himself to the moment for all his language. This is the safe way for his comfort, and the only sure way to make all of a uniform piece.

“To this general rule there may however be some exceptions. It may be well, for example, to consider what synonymous terms may be employed in recurring to the chief topic, in order to avoid the too frequent reiteration of the same word. This will occasion no embarrassment. An extemporaneous preacher may also prepare texts of scripture to be introduced in certain parts of his discourse. These, if perfectly committed to memory, and if he be not too anxious to make a place for them, will be no incumbrance. When a suitable juncture occurs they will suggest themselves, just as a suitable epithet suggests itself. But if he be very solicitous about them, and continually on the watch for an opportunity to introduce them, he will be likely to confuse himself, and it is better to lose the choicest quotation than suffer constraint and awkwardness from the effort to bring it in. Under the same restrictions he may have ready some pithy remarks, striking and laconic expressions, pointed sayings and aphorisms, the force of which depends on the precise form of the phrase. Let the same rule be observed in regard to such. If they suggest themselves (which they will do if there be a proper place for them), let them be welcome; but never let him run the risk of spoiling a whole paragraph in trying to make a place for them. Many distinguished speakers are said to do more than this—to write out with care, and repeat from memory, their more important and persuasive parts; like the *de bene esse’s* of Curran and the splendid passages of many others. This may undoubtedly be done to advantage by one who has that command of himself which practice gives and has learned to pass from memory to invention without tripping. It is a different case from that *mixture* of the two operations to which I have referred, and is in fact only an extended example of the exceptions just made.

“With these exceptions, the extempore preacher should make no preparation of

language. Language is the last thing he should be anxious about. If he have ideas, and be awake, it will come of itself, unbidden and unsought. The best language flashes upon the speaker as unexpectedly as upon the hearer. It is the spontaneous gift of the mind, not the extorted boon of a special search. No man who has thoughts, and is interested in them, is at a loss for words—not the most uneducated man; and the words he uses will be according to his education and general habits, not according to the labour of the moment. If he truly feel, and wish to communicate his feelings to those around him, the last thing that will fail him will be language; the less he thinks of it and cares for it, the more copiously and richly will it flow from him; and when he has forgotten every thing but his desire to give vent to his emotions and do good, then will the unconscious torrent pour, as it does at no other season. This entire surrender to the spirit which stirs within is indeed the real secret of all eloquence. 'True eloquence,' says Milton, 'I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others,—when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.'

"In order to the best success, extemporaneous efforts should be made in an excited state of mind, when the thoughts are burning and glowing, and long to find vent. There are some topics which do not admit of this excitement. Such should be treated by the pen. When the preacher would speak extemporaneously, he should choose topics on which his own mind is kindled with a feeling which he is earnest to communicate, and the higher the degree to which he has elevated his feelings the more readily, happily, and powerfully will he pour forth whatever the occasion may demand. There is no style suited to the pulpit which he will not more effectually command in this state of mind. He will reason more directly, pointedly, and convincingly; he will describe more vividly from the living conceptions of the moment; he will be more earnest in persuasion, more animated in declamation, more urgent in appeals, more terrible in denunciation. Every thing will vanish from before him but the subject of his attention, and upon this his powers will be concentrated in keen and vigorous action.

"If a man would do his best it must be upon topics which are at the moment interesting to him. We see it in conversation, where every one is eloquent upon his favourite subjects. We see it in deliberative assemblies, where it is those grand questions which excite an intense interest, and absorb and agitate the mind—that call forth those bursts of eloquence by which men are remembered as powerful orators—and that give a voice to men who can speak on no other occasions. Cicero tells us of himself that the instances in which he was most successful were those in which he most entirely abandoned himself to the impulses of feeling. Every speaker's experience will bear testimony to the same thing; and thus the saying of Goldsmith proves true, that 'to feel one's subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence.' Let him who would preach successfully remember this. In the choice of subjects for extemporaneous efforts let him have regard to it, and never encumber himself nor distress his hearers with the attempt to interest them in a subject which excites at the moment only a feeble interest in his own mind. Let him also use every means, by careful meditation,—by calling up the strong motives of his office,—by realizing the nature and responsibility of his undertaking, and by earnestly invoking the blessing of God,—to attain that frame of devout engagedness which will dispose him to speak zealously and fearlessly.

"Another important item in the discipline to be passed through, consists in attaining the habit of self-command. I have already adverted to this point, and noticed the power which the mind possesses of carrying on the premeditated operation even while the speaker is considerably embarrassed. This is, however, only a reason for not being too much distressed by the feeling when only occasional; it does not imply that it is no evil. It is a most serious evil, of little comparative moment, it may be, when only occasional and transitory, but highly injurious if

habitual. It renders the speaker unhappy, and his address ineffective. If perfectly at ease, he would have every thing at command, and be able to pour out his thoughts in lucid order and with every desirable variety of manner and expression. But, when thrown from his self-possession, he can do nothing better than mechanically string together words, while there is no soul in them, because his mental powers are spell-bound and imbecile. He stammers, hesitates, and stumbles, or at best talks on without object or aim, as mechanically and unconsciously as an automaton. He has learned little effectually, until he has learned to be collected. This therefore must be a leading object of attention. It will not be attained by men of delicacy and sensibility, except by long and trying practice. It will be the result of much rough experience and many mortifying failures. And, after all, occasions may occur when the most experienced will be put off their guard. Still, however, much may be done by the control which a vigorous mind has over itself, by resolute and persevering determination, by refusing to shrink or give way, and by preferring always the mortification of ill success to the increased weakness which would grow out of retreating.

"There are many considerations besides which if kept before the mind would operate not a little to strengthen its confidence in itself. Let the speaker be sensible that if self-possessed he is not likely to fail; that after faithful study and preparation there is nothing to stand in his way but his own want of self-command. Let him heat his mind with his subject, endeavour to feel nothing, and care for nothing but that. Let him consider that his audience takes for granted that he says nothing but what he designed, and does not notice those slight errors which annoy and mortify him, that in truth such errors are of no moment, that he is not speaking for reputation and display, nor for the gratification of others by the exhibition of a rhetorical model, nor for the satisfaction of a cultivated taste; but that he is a teacher of virtue, a messenger of Jesus Christ, a speaker in the name of God, whose chosen object it is to lead men above all secondary considerations and worldly attainments, and to create in them a fixed and lasting interest in spiritual and religious concerns. Let him, in a word, be zealous to do good, to promote religion, to save souls, and little anxious to make what might be called a fine sermon,—let him learn to sink every thing in his subject and the purpose it should accomplish—ambitious rather to do good than to do well—and he will be in a great measure secure from the loss of self-command and its attendant distress.

"After all, therefore, which can be said, the great essential requisite to effective preaching in this method (or indeed in any method) is a *devoted heart*. A strong religious sentiment, leading to a fervent zeal for the good of other men, is better than all rules of art; it will give him courage which no science or practice could impart, and open his lips boldly when the fear of man would keep them closed. Art may fail him, and all his treasures of knowledge desert him; but, if his heart be warm with love, he will 'speak right on,' aiming at the heart, and reaching the heart, and satisfied to accomplish the great purpose, whether he be thought to do it tastefully or not.

"This is the true spirit of his office, to be cherished and cultivated above all things else, and capable of rendering all its labours comparatively easy. It reminds him that his purpose is not to make profound discussions on theological doctrines, or disquisitions on moral and metaphysical science, but to present such views of the great and acknowledged truths of revelation, with such applications of them to the understanding and conscience, as may affect and reform his hearers. Now it is not study only, in divinity or in rhetoric, which will enable him to do this. He may reason ingeniously, but not convincingly: he may declaim eloquently, but not persuasively. There is an immense, though indescribable difference between the same arguments and truths, as presented by him who earnestly feels and desires to persuade, and by him who designs only a display of intellectual strength or an exercise of rhetorical skill. In the latter case, the declamation may be splendid, but it will be cold and without expression—lulling the ear, and diverting the fancy, but leaving the feelings untouched. In the other, there is an air of reality and sincerity which words cannot describe but which the heart feels, that finds its way

to the recesses of the soul and overcomes it by a powerful sympathy. This is a difference which all perceive and all can account for. The truths of religion are not matters of philosophical speculation but of experience. The heart and all the spiritual man, and all the interests and feelings of the immortal being, have an intimate concern in them. It is perceived at once whether they are stated by one who has felt them himself, is personally acquainted with their power, is subject to their influence and speaks from actual experience—or whether they come from one who knows them only in speculation, has gathered them from books, and thought them out by his own reason, but without any sense of their spiritual operation.

“But who does not know how much easier it is to declare what has come to our knowledge from our own experience than what we have gathered coldly at second-hand from that of others? how much easier it is to describe feelings we have ourselves had, and pleasures we have ourselves enjoyed, than to fashion a description of what others have told us? how much more freely and convincingly we can speak of happiness we have known than of that to which we are strangers? We see, then, how much is lost to the speaker by coldness or ignorance in the exercises of personal religion. How can he effectually represent the joys of a religious mind who has never known what it is to feel them? How can he effectually aid the contrite, the desponding, the distrustful, the tempted, who has never himself passed through the same fears and sorrows? or how can he paint, in the warm colours of truth, religious exercises and spiritual desires, who is personally a stranger to them? Alas! he cannot at all come in contact with those souls which stand most in need of his sympathy and aid. But if he have cherished in himself, fondly and habitually, the affections which he would excite in others,—if he have combated temptation, and practised self-denial, and been instant in prayer, and tasted the joy and peace of a tried faith and hope,—then he may communicate directly with the hearts of his fellow-men, and win them over to that which he so feelingly describes. If his spirit be always warm and stirring with these pure and kind emotions, and anxious to impart the means of his own felicity to others, how easily and freely will he pour himself forth! and how little will he think of the embarrassments of the presence of mortal man, while he is conscious only of labouring for the glory of the ever-present God!”

No. IV.

KEY TO THE STUDENT'S LIBRARY.

THE following plan will discover in a few minutes what the library affords upon any given text or subject; and thus, with the addition of commentators in his possession, concordances, parallelisms, and private memorandums, the preacher's own thoughts will be enriched, and his matter extended. If the books be numerous, this plan will at first cost some time and trouble; but it is scarcely possible to conceive the great and many advantages that will reward the labour. In many cases the labour will however be but small at the first, and the plan will be gradually filled up as the library is augmented. Every book bought should add something to the stock either for texts or subjects. I can only trace the plan to the late Dr. Bogue. It requires three books and indexes.

The first of these is a *general registry-book*, or *text-book*, wherein all the volumes of sermons, or single sermons, are to be entered. The numbers on the left are the student's private numbers, and by these numbers the several articles are to be transferred into the other two books, for their several uses, thus:—

BATES'S SERMONS, Vol. 1.			Pages of Books.
1	Existence of God	Psalm xc. 2.	5
2	Immortality of the Soul	Gen. ii. 7.	37
3	Resignation. "Not my will," &c.	Mat. xxvi. 39.	263
TILLOTSON, Vol. 1.			
4	Sincerity. "Behold an Israelite,"	John i. 47.	1
5	Faith of Abrah. in offering his Son	Heb. xi. 17—19.	11
6	Moses' Choice. "He chose," &c.	Heb. xi, 24, 25.	21
BLAIR, Vol. 1.			
7	Piety and Morality in Cornelius	Acts x. 4.	1
8	Religion in Adversity	Psalm xxvii. 6.	25
9	—— Prosperity	Psalm i. 3.	58
BOURDALOÛE, Vol. 1.			
10	Birth of Christ	Luke ii. 12.	1
11	His Passion	Luke xxiii. 28.	141
12	The Trinity	Mat. xxviii. 29.	476

My numbers run to 7000, besides my own manuscripts, the accumulation of thirty years. And, besides this stock, Mr. Simeon furnished me with 2440, which (except skeletons) have such an order in themselves that no registry is required. The skeletons I mark in the interleaved Bible (soon to be named) merely with the number of the skeleton, in *red ink*, to distinguish these from my registry numbers. It is from this large source that my examples for the PREACHER'S MANUAL are drawn. As far as my judgment and time to exercise it allowed, I selected such as were suitable to the several objects in view, and I humbly hope they will be a benefit to thousands who cannot make the same research. My common-place books were also open to me.

The second book is an *interleaved Bible*, every leaf having a blank page. A Bible should be bought in sheets and given to the binder with orders to insert the blanks; and, that the whole be not too bulky, let all the books before Isaiah form the first volume, and the others the second volume. As there are two columns of print in a page of the Bible, so a line should be drawn down the middle of the blank to answer thereto; and, to as many figures of verses as are in a page of the Bible, so you give in writing figures in each column exactly opposite, as in the following specimen:—

Verses.	Register Nos.	Verses.	Register Nos.
17	. . 5, 8	23	. . 24, 8, 3
18	. . 12, 17, 27, 26	24	. . 9, 7, 10
19	. . 8, 14, 19, 45	25	. . 6, 28, 38
20	. . 4, 6, 28, 32	26	. . 8, 58, 20
21	. . 6, 5, 12, 22	27	. . 16, 72, 65
22	. . 3, 12, 15, 19	28	. . 17,

Here then you commence your operations. Against Ps. xc. 2, you place No. 1 of Registry-book; against Gen. ii. 7, No. 2; Matt. xxvi. 39, No. 3; and so on to the end. Then follows the practical use. You wish to preach from Ps. xc. 2; you turn to your interleaved Bible for Ps. xc. 2, and find against it No. 1; to know what this No. 1 means, you turn to your Registry-book for No. 1, and there you find Bates on the Existence of God; and perhaps you may have other figures directing to other works in your interleaved Bible, as in the index just given you find several numbers to nearly every verse; in this manner you proceed for other texts. Nothing but a plan like this could give so short or so certain a way to know what you have on a text; for your memory may fail, and you may

not have time to make search. While the library is very small, it may be sufficient to place the registry numbers in the margins of the Bible in common use; but, when enlarged, this brief way must be abandoned, and give place to the plan now recommended.

Your third book is available for *subjects*, and may be formed like a lawyer's or book-keeper's ledger in reference to book-keeping. The journal contains the affairs transacted with every correspondent as they occur; it is a general record, and fills one book after another. But if it be required to know all that has been transacted or done for this or that person, and no other book be used, search must be made throughout the whole journal, and the items must be drawn out at an immense labour. Now to save this monstrous labour a ledger is provided, and particulars of each correspondent's account are drawn from the journal to distinct folios of the ledger. Such pages in the ledger give the whole account; but, as there would still be great trouble in turning over the pages of the ledger to find particular persons' accounts, an alphabetical index is provided to direct to the pages where each account is placed. This comparison answers to the students' Common-place book. The pattern of this Common-place book I shall give presently; but first I give the pattern of the index, which is as follows:—

A.		Distress	25
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Here then the course of proceeding is plain: folio 1 of the Common-place book receives the above article, *Attributes of God*: whatever the library has upon the divine attributes appears at folio 1, and so on for other articles: but in this case it were better, after mentioning his existence, No. 1, in the Registry, to say, *see article God* in the above index, p. 179, as this opens to a great variety of divinity matter.

Here follows a specimen of such a page:—

Article, God.

Collect the material of this page from anything your Registry furnishes (Say, see Registry, for shortness R. only, No. 1) from such divinity books as you possess. Hence you collect Jehovah's names, his Nature, Immutability, Infinity, Omnipre-

sence, Wisdom, Will, Sovereignty, Love, Grace, Goodness, his Works of Creation, &c., &c., marking down at each particular the author, volume, and page where each is to be found.

You may again divide this great subject and transfer them to other pages as distinct heads, giving in the index such titles and pages, under the words respectively.

Another page.

SOUL.—You will have its immortality, nature, spirituality, &c. Name often used for *spirit*, and more properly so, naming such authors as your library gives; as Flavel on the Soul. You will see the Registry, No. 2, Soul's Immortality, referring to Bates's Lectures, p. 37.

The word MIND is also connected with the subject, and sometimes the HEART: on all these several words, Soul, Spirit, &c., refer to Theological Dictionaries,—for these give ideas as well as words.

See more particularly Cruden's Concordance, under the words *Soul*, *Spirit*, and in his explanations you get much information.

You will also collect for every article what even general indexes of works in hand furnish: here you obtain great help. When you purchase books, observe that those which have good indexes are worth twice the money of those that have none. The matter obtained through indexes, if appropriate, is likewise on certain accounts to be preferred before all others, for such matter is not so much subject to the recognition of knowing persons, as if taken from sermons, &c., professing to treat on the subject.

1. In the examination of your indexes, you first observe your proper subject, as by pattern of a page in Common-place book, No. 2, on *Soul*.

2. In the examination you meet with similar ideas, as *Spirit*, *Mind*, &c. Regard affinities in general for illustration or collateral uses.

3. You may note down whatever you hear in the preaching of other ministers, or what they say in conversation, if worth noting, or what is found in magazines, or such works as the Pulpit, &c.

4. You may make a brief abstract from the books you borrow, that will suit many articles in your index.

5. If books have tables of contents, examine these also.

6. Put down to each article your own best thoughts, conceived when your mind is clear and vigorous.

7. Whatever you find in commentators that is pertinent to any subject, note down or refer to the volume, page, &c.

8. A good parallel Bible will give help, and some of these, as A. Clarke's have *general indexes*.

9. The table of contents, general index, and table of scriptures of the Preacher's Manual will furnish much matter; but facility of reference will be best secured by noting in the proper pages of your Common-place book what you meet with as strikingly suitable.

In general practice, when you wish to preach from a *text*, besides what matter you have upon such text, you may refer to the subject nearest akin to the text in your index of Common-places. In all divinity subjects the doctrine of *affinities* (or of relationship, Topic IV.), is of great consequence to be observed. And, *et con.* if you wish to preach on a *subject*, you will choose a text to suit it, as Dwight does in his Theology, so that your Registry and Common-place book mutually assist each other.

It is my constant practice when I have preached from a text to mark the year when it was used in the margin of my study Bible: if you do so it will prevent your preaching inadvertently on the same text.* At the end of six or seven years I do not hesitate, as circumstances may dictate, to preach a second time on any text; for in that time what was before said is forgotten and the congregation is in

* A friend of mine once took a certain text; this done, it darted into his mind that he had used it a few weeks before at the same place; this was not the fact, but he thought so, and his distress was great.

general greatly changed; but even in such cases I endeavour to improve my old skeleton, and then nobody can justly complain.

How ministers can go on with credit without an arranged library I cannot conceive: yet I know some that have several thousands of volumes and often know not what they contain nor where to go for helps. If any can go on so it must be by the assistance of an amazing memory (such as I have not), but I suspect that the poverty of thousands of sermons is owing to the want in question. But, though I recommend so many sources, yet I would not have you to over-crowd your sermons, or rather overcharge them with matter, as some persons do, by which they often discuss nothing effectually.

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